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Near East/North Africa Report

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6 July 1979

NEAR EAST/NORTH AFRICA REPORT

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INTER-ARAB AFFAIRS

BRIEFS

GEOCHEMICAL COLLOQUIUM--From 5 May to 7 June in Sidi Fredj, Algeria will play host to the members of the OPAEP (Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries) at a "colloquium on reservoir engineering." Modern methods of prospecting and exploiting petroleum deposits will be studied and compared at the meeting. In the field of exploration in particular, Algeria does not lag behind, since following geological and then geographic studies, SONATRACH was already undertaking geochemical exploration in the Bechar region as early as 1964. We recall that this method, which is based on the search for minute signs of the migration of petroleum in the rock and soil surrounding natural reservoirs, is advantageous because of the limited means required for carrying it out. A geochemical mission makes from 20 to 40 analyses per day; a couple of weeks are therefore sufficient for studying a structure of medium size at a cost from 5 to 10 times less than the cost of seismic studies of equal accuracy. The samples, which are often found at a depth of less than 1 meter and which never require more than light drilling, facilitate the application of this method in practically all terrains, all climates, and all contours. [Text] [Paris MARCHES TROPICAUX ET MEDITERRANEENS in French 18 May 79 p 1238] 11798

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ALGERIA

BRIEFS

AGREEMENT WITH TURKEY--In Ankara on 9 May, Algeria and Turkey signed an agreement aimed at increasing the volume of trade between the two countries, according to an official announcement in the Turkish capital. The agreement, which cancels and replaces the 1967 trade agreement between Turkey and Algeria, was signed by Abdelghani Akbi, member of the Central Committee and Algerian minister of commerce, and his Turkish counterpart, Tecman Koprululer. Koprululer said, "This agreement, which falls within the framework of Turkish policy aimed at strengthening our relations with the countries of the Middle East and Africa and especially the Islamic world, will add new dimensions to commercial ties between the two countries." [Text] [Paris MARCHES TROPICAUX ET MEDITERRANEENS in French 18 May 79 p 1238] 11798

INSUFFICIENT MEDICAL PERSONNEL--During the coordination conference that began in Algiers on 23 April, Minister of Public Health Abderrezak Bouhara described the situation in his sector to the governors. Algeria should have 12,000 doctors in order to have one for every 2,000 inhabitants. It has scarcely half that many, and 2,000 of those are foreigners, chiefly specialists. Of the 4,000 Algerian doctors, 1,000 are in private practice, 1,000 are employed by the nationalized firms and the public administration, and 2,000 work for the public health services. Their geographic distribution further aggravates the differences: Oran has one doctor for every 1,200 inhabitants, while Jijel has one for every 11,700. The situation with paramedics is an even greater cause for concern. Paramedical personnel number 21,000, while national requirements probably amount to 71,000, and the current capacity for training such personnel does not exceed 5,000 annually. Bouhara made it clear that in view of this situation, the local communities should spend considerable time on public hygiene, water purification, and the general improvement of sanitation. [Text] [Paris MARCHES TROPICAUX ET MEDITERRANEENS in French 18 May 79 p 1238] 11798

MINISTER ON UNIVERSITY EDUCATION--Abdelhak Brerhi, Algerian minister of higher education and scientific research, chose the governorate of Annaba for the start of his series of tours aimed at preparing for the new university academic year. The minister emphasized the government's main policies in this area: a progressive and scientific Arabization not only of the

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content of the curricula but also of teaching and of teaching personnel; coherent research programs serving the national interest rather than isolated programs having a thesis in view; and the printing of the necessary books (145,000 books in Arabic will be imported, and the University Public Office will print another 165,000). In Setif, Brerhi explained the government's policy for the coming academic year. A university center, built in 2 years time and capable of accepting 1,500 students in September, will be inaugurated in Setif. The institutes of exact and biological sciences already exist and have 245 students, and the institute of economics, a center for practical language study, and an institute of optics and precision engineering will also begin operations. Six units and 13 laboratories have already been accepted, and 12 more laboratories will be completed in September, as will four 120-seat amphitheaters (with five more to follow) and 98 study halls. [Text] [Paris MARCHES TROPICAUX ET MEDITERRANEENS in French 18 May 79 p 1238] 11798

AGRICULTURAL COOPERATION WITH AUSTRALIA--Biran Chatterton, South Australia's minister of agriculture, forestry, and fisheries, has been visiting Algeria since 5 May (see MARCHES TROPICAUX ET MEDITERRANEENS, 11 May). He has held talks with Brahim Brahmi, secretary of state for forests, concerning cooperation between the two countries. The development of medicago (annual alfalfa) crops will benefit from recent Australian experiments. The Ksar Chellala project will soon go into operation in six communes and will cover 850,000 hectares at the southern edge of the Saharan Atlas. It is aimed at integrated agropastoral development: 2,000 irrigated hectares, steppe pasturage, the improvement of livestock, and the improvement of techniques for the production of dry fodder. [Text] [Paris MARCHES TROPICAUX ET MEDITERRANEENS in French 18 May 79 p 1238] 11798

COOPERATION WITH POLAND--A protocol of agreement between Algeria and Poland relative to the development of cooperation in the field of town planning, housing, and construction was signed on 17 May in Chebli, about 20 kilometers south of Algiers. Signing the agreement for the Algerian side was Abdelmadjid Aouchiche, minister of town planning, construction, and housing, while Adam Glazur, minister of construction materials industry, signed for the Polish side. Under the terms of this agreement, Algerian-Polish cooperation will cover the following areas: the transfer of technology and know-how, the supplying of construction equipment and materials and of prefabricated components, and services in the designing and completion of projects. [Text] [Paris MARCHES TROPICAUX ET MEDITERRANEENS in French 25 May 79 p 1295] 11798

BACCALAUREAT CANDIDATES--More than 80,000 candidates will take the baccalaureat examination this year, according to the West Algerian newspaper EL DJOUMHOURIA. The newspaper reports that this year's registrations show that the scientific sections are enjoying some degree of priority as far as numbers are concerned. Those sections, which last year provided 31,000 candidates, registered 38,000 candidates for 1979. The advanced statistics reveal a clear trend toward the scientific branches of learning, which include 20,991 candidates for the current year. The science branch includes 31,897 candidates, while 7,040 are registered in the mathematics branch. Also

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according to EL DJOUMHOURIA, 1979's baccalaureat candidates are divided geographically as follows: Algiers: 27,062 enrolled in lycees and 9,744 independent candidates; Oran: 11,064 enrolled in lycees and 3,015 independent candidates; and Constantine: 21,820 enrolled in lycees and 7,792 independent candidates. [Text] [Paris MARCHES TROPICAUX ET MEDITERRANEENS in French 25 May 79 p 1295] 11798

CANADIAN LOAN TO SONATRACH--The SEE (Canadian Company for Export Expansion) announced on 16 May the granting of a loan of 3.7 million Canadian dollars (about 12 million francs) to SONATRACH to support the sale of Canadian equipment goods. The loan will enable SONATRACH to acquire services concerned with housing, cost verification, and quality control in connection with the output of its enterprises. The company will also finance the training of SONATRACH employees in Skikda on the Mediterranean coast. The total cost of the project for the construction of a liquefied natural gas plant is estimated at 4.3 million Canadian dollars. This agreement is similar to the contract totaling 95.3 million Canadian dollars (about 380 million francs) that was signed by the SEE in July 1977 to support the sale of Canadian equipment goods and services in connection with another Algerian project in Arzew. [Text] [Paris MARCHES TROPICAUX ET MEDITERRANEENS in French 25 May 79 p 1296] 11798

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IRAQ

MILITARY PURCHASES FROM SPAIN, FRANCE IN PLANNING STAGE

London THE MIDDLE EAST in English Jun 79 p 20

[Article by Tewfik Mishlawi]

[Text] In a dramatic move to demonstrate its independence from Moscow, Iraq is considering plans to buy sophisticated military hardware from Spain and France worth \$2.5 billion. Baghdad's arms-purchasing policy has been geared towards Soviet weaponry for more than a decade, but the shift is in line with the attitude of the Iraqi regime which, in recent years, has been taking every possible opportunity to underline its independence.

Iraqi leaders, particularly Saddam Hussain, Vice Chairman of the Revolution Command Council, have made painstaking efforts to emphasise their openness to the West. But they have also stressed that the ruthless clampdown on the pro-Soviet Iraqi Communist Party should not affect "friendly and strategic" relations with the Soviet Union.

Moscow and Baghdad may differ on ideological and political issues related to the Arab cause, but they are "strategically allied against imperialism and in support of national liberation, movements throughout the world".

Few observers would dispute this, but they feel that Soviet leaders are unhappy about Iraq's internal and external policies.

Iraq's shift to the West took the form of direct contacts with exporters of machinery and equipment, and industrial plant builders. American and European firms have offices in Baghdad and are readily available for consultation and advice. As a result Soviet-bloc organisations found they were losing contracts.

Now, the new policy is affecting arms purchases which had hitherto been made almost exclusively in the Soviet Union. Defence Minister Adnan Khairallah made an extensive tour of the Spanish and French arms industries in May with a long shopping list intended to improve the defence capabilities of the Iraqi armed forces.

Informed sources said Spain is expected to become Iraq's third biggest supplier of weapons and warships under a projected five-year deal worth around \$900 million. Spain is also expected to be contracted to set up factories in Iraq to produce light arms and military vehicles. At the same time, negotiations are under way on long-term crude oil supply arrangements to increase Spain's oil imports from Iraq to \$1 billion in 1980 from the present \$500 million.

Iraqi arms purchases from France are expected to be worth around \$1.6 billion over the next five years. Eventually, France may become Iraq's main arms supplier. At the same time, Iraq has already agreed to become France's principal oil supplier, and will boost its oil exports to France from less than 20 million tons in 1978 to 25 million tons in 1979. By 1983-84, France should receive 50 million tons of Iraqi oil a year.

Khairallah's shopping list reportedly included 60 Mirage-2000s, a sophisticated radar system, guided missiles and fast missile-carrying boats. Some French press reports speculated that Iraqi aircraft purchases from France might reach 100 Mirages, and that some of the new military hardware might be deployed in Syria.

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Furthermore, France has not abandoned its commitment to supply Iraq with two experimental nuclear reactors to replace those mysteriously blown up in April at Seynes-sur-Mer shortly before they were to be shipped to Iraq.

Some observers in Beirut believe that the principal motive behind Iraq's arms policy shift has been Soviet reluctance to supply both Iraq and possibly Syria, with the weapons needed to restore the "strategic balance" with Israel. This balance had been disrupted by the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty, according to officials in Damascus and Baghdad.

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IRAQ

BRIEFS

NEW PROJECTS--Subsidiary companies of the West German steel and engineering group, Salzgitter, have won orders worth a total of DM250mn (about \$131mn) for the supply of two brick factories worth DM150mn, which are on order from Salzgitter Stahl and are due for completion within 18 months. Hanover-based brick kiln design specialists Karl Walter will also be involved in the project. The gas tanks are to be supplied by George Noell for installation near Basra port by the end of 1981. In another Iraqi contract for West Germany, Siemens has been appointed to supply electrical equipment worth DM9mn (about \$4.7mn) to the oil refinery now under construction by Technoexport of Czechoslovakia at Baiji in the north. The refinery will start operations in 1981 with an initial capacity of 3.5mn tons a year, rising to some 7mn tons later on. The capital of the Iraqi Fund for External Development (IFED) is to be doubled to ID100mn. The Fund's capital has remained at ID50mn since it was set up in 1974. The increase coincides with expressions of concern on the part of Iraqi officials that ways should be found to alleviate the burden of this year's oil price rises for developing countries. Iraq is said to be working on proposals for some new form of financing facility to deal with the problem. [Text] [London THE MIDDLE EAST in English Jun 79 p 112]

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MAURITANIA

MAURITANIA'S NEED FOR SAHARAN PEACE STRESSED

London THE MIDDLE EAST in English Jun 79 p 39

[Text]

It is not just the war in the Sahara which is causing economic and social chaos in Mauritania, although this is the most obvious immediate cause. Even if a solution is found in the near future the problems of urbanisation, poverty and racial tension will remain.

Austerity has been the watchword of the two military regimes which succeeded the 18-year-old regime of Mauritanian President Mokhtar Ould-Daddah, but in the capital of Nouakchott business goes on as usual. Construction continues despite the severe economic crisis and uncertain political situation.

This is only one of the many paradoxes in Mauritania where, in spite of the bitter three-year Saharan war, many high ranking Government officials privately admit that they sympathise with and support the Polisario liberation front.

Nouakchott is essentially a modern creation, but it differs from other urban centres in the region in that it is not the result of oil wealth. It is essentially an administrative centre for the young and still fragile Mauritanian state.

At independence in 1960, Nouakchott was just a military outpost and small trading centre. It was originally designed by French architects to accommodate some 30,000 inhabitants. But at present it has an estimated population of about 180,000 to 200,000 out of a total of about 1.4 million.

This means that one out of seven Mauritaniens lives in the capital, a trend which began in the late 1960's and was greatly accelerated by the combined effect of the prolonged sahel drought and the war in the north.

As in other countries in the Arab world, the relative neglect of development of the rural sector of the economy has hastened this population flow.

Nouakchott does not have the necessary sanitary and social services for its new inhabitants. The tarmac roads end in a vast tent and shanty town housing the most recent arrivals from the countryside. One doctor told *The Middle East* that almost half the children in the 5th and 6th districts were so underfed that many would soon suffer the effects of permanent undernourishment.

But while these seemingly endless bidonvilles spring up around Nouakchott, the finishing touches are being put to two multi-million-dollar mosques in the centre of the town. One, given by King Hassan of Morocco, is in pure Maghreb style. The second, a gift from Saudi Arabia, is a bit more eclectic in design.

One senior Mauritanian official wryly commented that in many ways these mosques were the symbol of the former regime's policy of pursuing prestige projects. "We are a people of nomads", he said, "and do not need these splendid mosques to pray. We are used to turning to Mecca from anywhere in the immense Sahara."

A Mauritanian sociologist pointed out that the money used for these religious

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centres could have been used to provide the badly needed basic infrastructure for many parts of the town which lack even a steady supply of water.

The phenomenon of urbanisation is likely to play a key role in the country's political future, he believed. For example in 1946 about 70 per cent of the population was nomadic and only 30 per cent lived in the urban centres. The last census, in 1977, indicated that these figures had been reversed.

And as Mauritania was traditionally ruled on a feudal basis, the former ties of dependence and domination have been largely destroyed without new forms replacing them.

The struggle against slavery has been a leitmotif of Government policy for quite some time. The former group of black African servants, known as the harratine, have attempted to shake off the yoke of their secular domination by the Moorish population.

Many have fled to Nouakchott to try and build a new life and others are trying to change the situation in the rural areas. But when the harratine openly oppose their former masters, the state administration and local marabouts usually support the Moorish population.

Mauritania's immediate fate is linked to the finding of a peaceful settlement to the Western Sahara conflict. But the rapid and profound social changes of the past few years are likely to be a determining factor in the post-war era. "Nothing will be the same in Mauritania," the sociologist added, "The future governments will have to face the realities of a mainly urban society in a poor underdeveloped nation where the rules of the political game will be radically altered. The vast urban lumpenproletariat could either be the basis of a progressive political movement or a utopian Islamic revivalist phenomenon along the lines of the Iranian revolution." □

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SUDAN

NUMAYRI, POPULAR MOVEMENTS, EGYPTIAN RELATIONS DISCUSSED

Egyptian Troops Said Present

Paris AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI in Arabic 27 Apr-3 May 79 pp 27-29

[Interview with Badr-al-Din Mudaththar, Ba'th Party Official in Sudan, by Badr al-Hajj: "Badr-al-Din Mudaththar: Dunqulah Turns Into Egyptian Military Base To Strike Any Movement Against Numayri and al-Sadat; Numayri and Egyptian Intelligence Are Planning To Strike Ba'th Party in Sudan; Why Did Numayri Raise Slogan of Arab Solidarity and Then Abandon It When Achieved in Baghdad Summit; al-Ansar [Partisans] Are Enormous National Force; al-Mahdi I Tried To Liberate Egypt Under Leadership of 'Arabi"]

[Text] Baghdad--For the first time in the Arab Africa, an ideological nationalist party deriving its roots and principles from the Arab East has been able to make its way among the Arab masses there, raising the banner of its unionist call.

This is stated not only by the leaders of the Socialist Arab Ba'th Party in Sudan but is also acknowledged by the regime of Sudanese President Ja'far Numayri and by his agencies, which accuse this party of mobilizing the Sudanese against the regime because these agencies can no longer ignore this party's role, activity and effectiveness.

On the occasion of these "official" Sudanese accusations, AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI addressed to a leader of the Ba'th Party in Sudan a number of questions on the tenuous current situation in this Arab country, on the regime's position and on the distribution of the partisan and nationalist forces on the political map.

Badr-al-Din Mudaththar, member of the Ba'th Party National Command who has worked in the general field in Sudan and who was one of the first advocates of this party there, has answered these questions, defining the position and basic starting points of the Sudanese Ba'thists and the current Sudanese situation in the wake of President Numayri's alignment with President al-Sadat and in the light of the transformation of Sudan into a base for Egyptian military activities inside Sudan and in the African and Arab area.

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[Question] The governor of Khartoum has accused the Socialist Arab Ba'th Party in Sudan of leading the latest demonstrations against Numayri's regime. What is your reply and what is your visualization of the situation in Sudan?

[Answer] In fact, the governor of Khartoum and other officials of the Sudanese regime have recently attributed all the acts of resistance and opposition, whether in the form of student, worker or vocational strikes or at the level of political and popular moves generally, to the Socialist Arab Ba'th Party in Sudan.

In truth, the opposition to the regime in Sudan is comprehensive. The regime has become fully isolated, even from the forces that were at one time misled or that believed that it was possible to reform this regime.

Egyptian Intelligence and Ba'th Party

[Question] Egyptian forces are present in large numbers in Sudan. Do they take part in the act of suppressing the opposition?

[Answer] Previously, since July 1971, tens of Ba'thists were arrested and kept under detention for long periods. Many of them have been re-arrested. But the government has not announced anything in this regard. This has been the plan of the Egyptian intelligence, which believed that announcing the measures taken against the Ba'th Party in our country or referring to this party's effectiveness will lead to strengthening the party in Sudan.

Naturally, with the continually escalating struggle of the party, it has become impossible for the agencies of Numayri's regime to continue implementing this instruction from the Egyptian intelligence. The Egyptian intelligence and Numayri's agencies which are linked with them are now to suppress the Ba'th Party by attributing everything to this party.

The fact is that the party is escalating its struggle against Numayri's regime constantly and ceaselessly. However, it is certain that this party is not the only one in the Sudanese arena. Attributing everything to the Ba'th Party is intended to prepare the way to deal blows to this party. The authorities have recently resorted to the arrest of a number of Ba'thists, progressive nationalists and honorable unionists in the various areas and cities of Sudan on the pretext of their belonging to the party, of possessing its pamphlets or of taking part in the strikes called for or supported by the party.

[Question] But can the regime and the Egyptian intelligence destroy the party's activities and effectiveness in Sudan through their acts of suppression?

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[Answer] The thing that I want to assert now is that the time to uproot the Ba'th from the soil of the national struggle in Sudan has gone, because the party's roots have become deep. The party is the product of the suffering of the Sudanese people in their entirety and the outcome of the hard labor whose excruciating pain has been experienced by the national struggle movement.

The party in Sudan is now going through the phase of bolstering its cohesion with the masses and is struggling in this direction, having absorbed the lessons of the entire national movement since al-Mahdi's revolution. The party is struggling against many of the flaws and ailments that have afflicted some of the political forces in the Sudanese arena, such as the inclination toward exclusiveness, individualism, custodianship and monopolization of the progressive nationalist action.

Position of Numayri's Regime

[Question] Can you give us an idea on the position of President Numayri's regime in Sudan at present?

[Answer] Sudan is presently ruled by a regime in which Numayri forms everything, regardless of the regime's establishments and institutions. This regime has lost all the justifications for its continuation and has exhausted all the means through which it has tried to prolong its life. Numayri has engaged in many games in this regard: The political balance game, the regional balance game and the game of peddling the historical relations between Sudan and Egypt. Finally, he is trying to play the game of the international balances. He has done all this to perpetuate his regime, which will inevitably fall.

For example, the game of political balance ended with failure because he exhausted all the forces that can be used in this game. In 1969, 1970 and 1971, Numayri played on the conflicts of the communists and the Nasirists, on the division among the communists themselves and on the conflict between all these parties on one hand and some local regional socialist democrats on the other hand.

After 1971, he tried to strike a balance between whoever continued to support him among those forces on the one hand and the parties of the opposition National Front--which included at the time the Nation's [al-ummah] Party, the Muslim Brotherhood and the Democratic Unionist Party--on the other hand. Reconciliation with this front was started in August 1971.

After 6 years, the reconciliation was able to absorb al-Sadiq al-Mahdi and the Muslim Brotherhood only. Instead of turning into an element bolstering the regime, the reconciliation--which is part of the political balance game--weakened the regime and the Nation's Party and has led to isolating al-Sadiq al-Mahdi from al-Ansar masses. This reconciliation has not strengthened

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the regime at all, because the regime has turned into a fire that burns whoever comes close to it, and no force added to this regime can break the isolation surrounding it.

[Question] What is the position of the other political parties and forces in the country?

[Answer] The Democratic Unionist Party--the party of the traditional national movement--has been able to make the correct position on the side of the other national and progressive forces to isolate the right, represented by the Nation's Party and the Muslim Brotherhood. The slogan that the Ba'th Party has been ceaselessly raising in Sudan since the early 1960's calls for the creation of a broad alliance that includes the national movement (Democratic Unionist Party) and all the national and progressive forces.

But there were numerous obstacles and many mistakes committed by several parties in the national movement--mistakes for which the Democratic Unionist Party and its divisions were not solely responsible. Those mistakes obstructed the creation of this national alliance at the strategic level, and the Nation's Party continued to be present in the center of the picture of the political struggle.

At the same time, the national movement as a whole continued to be isolated from al-Ansar masses, contrary to our party that has always made a distinction between al-Ansar masses and the Nation's Party. We consider al-Ansar masses a human storehouse of the genuine national struggle heritage left by al-Mahdi's revolution. The colonialist plan is the side that seeks to isolate these masses from the rest of the national movement.

This is something in which the Nation's Party participated fundamentally because this party considered itself a custodian over these masses. However, large segments of this wall began to crack and collapse recently.

Thus, al-Ansar have become closely tied to the national movement through the camps set up abroad and through their coordination with the progressive national and pan-Arab elements in the labor unions and in the farmers movement in the areas of central Sudan (the White Nile) and in western Sudan. Meanwhile, the semi-feudalist political leadership which used to control these farmers has been isolated.

Al-Ansar have rejected reconciliation with Numayri because they are struggles capable of learning lessons from their previous private experiences. Bringing this regime to an end has become their central national goal--a goal which they will not abandon and through which they evaluate everything, even their traditional leadership. We believe that this is a big gain for the struggle of the Sudanese people in their entirety and for the future of the political movement in Sudan.

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Game of Regional Balance

[Question] You have said that President Numayri played the game of regional balance. What do you mean by this?

[Answer] Numayri started the game of regional balance with the south. The national movement as a whole, including our party, believed in autonomy for the south even before Numayri came to power. There are documents on this issue. But when Numayri concluded the Addis Ababa agreement on the south in 1972, he tried to make the southern citizens incorrectly think that nobody else in the north believed in regional autonomy for the south and that he personally was the only guarantee for this gain that was made by the southerners. On the other hand, Numayri tried to mislead the northerners into thinking that his downfall would constitute the zero hour for the secession of the south and that, consequently, whoever was thinking of toppling Numayri had to shoulder the responsibility of the secession of the south.

This game was uncovered quickly by both the southerners and the northerners, and our citizens have become aware of the true position of all the parties of the national political movement in the north. Our citizens in the north have also realized that the political movement in the south, and the southerners generally, are too mature and vigilant to tie the destiny of their country and its unity to the survival of one individual.

Moreover, Numayri is one of the officers who played a fundamental role in the bloody military actions against the south in the 1960's. He has also begun to play the same game with other provinces, for example in western Sudan where there are tribes with various political affiliations but where al-Ansar have numerical superiority. Western Sudan has a problem similar to that of the other Sudanese provinces, namely the problem of backwardness and the inability of the central government to secure the real and legitimate needs of the masses and the requirements of development.

The aim of this game was to incite regional jingoism, to prepare more cards for continuing the balance game, to incite the northern, central and eastern provinces against the west and, at the same time, to entrench and expand Numayri's central powers in his capacity as the symbol of the unity of these provinces.

The accusation made against the latest military movements as being movements perpetrated by secessionist elements in the west could not deceive anybody, because the citizens of western Sudan had never before staged any movement against or attacked any military garrisons in the area. A secessionist usually operates in the province which he wants separated, whereas the struggle of the citizens of western Sudan has always been connected with the position of the government in Khartoum because they believe that this is their role within the framework of the other forces to liberate the country from the catastrophe that has afflicted it.

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In 1975 and 1976, they staged their moves in Khartoum. In the wake of Numayri's support for al-Sadat's treaty with Israel and in the months of March and April 1979, they made their move with the citizens of the other areas of Sudan in the camps and quarters of Khartoum.

[Question] You criticize the position of al-Sadiq al-Mahdi even though he resigned and he has attacked President Numayri's position toward the Egyptian-Israeli treaty.

[Answer] Al-Sadiq al-Mahdi reconciled himself with Numayri and then submitted his resignation. Numayri says that al-Sadiq al-Mahdi is still in contact with him, that al-Mahdi is trying to persuade al-Ansar who are present in camps outside Sudan to return and that al-Mahdi's return is tied to this accomplishment.

When al-Sadiq al-Mahdi attacks the Camp David accord, he ties his attack to al-Sadat's independent march on the path of treason and to Numayri's individualistic issuance of decisions concerning Sudan's position toward al-Sadat's accords. He even demands the restoration of Arab solidarity on the path of Geneva [conference], or what he calls the just settlement. He believes that this is Sudan's role. This is actually Numayri's projected role at present. Carter and al-Sadat are not asking Numayri to say anything flagrant in support of al-Sadat or in attack on the conference of the Arab ministers of foreign affairs and of economy which was held in Baghdad. What is required of Numayri is to strengthen the presence of al-Sadat, and of the imperialist-Zionist alliance behind him, in Sudan. He is also required to maintain good relations with some Arab countries so that he may perform later some roles that will serve the plan seeking to break the isolation imposed on al-Sadat or preparing for another page in the settlement plan.

[Question] But can President Numayri play such a role, especially in the wake of his obvious alignment with President al-Sadat?

[Answer] This has been Numayri's role since the beginning. You remember that he was chairman of the so-called Arab Solidarity [Committee]. You also remember how enthusiastic for Arab solidarity he was after the visit of disgrace that al-Sadat had paid to the occupied Palestine. It is because of this enthusiasm that Numayri left everything and devoted himself to solidarity. This Arab solidarity meant at the time giving some legitimacy to al-Sadat's abominable action.

But when real Arab solidarity was realized through the minimal resolutions of the Baghdad summit last November, we found President Numayri, the bearer of the Arab solidarity slogan, to be the first man to refrain from attending the conference and to be content with sending his ambassador to Egypt, who was also al-Sadat's ambassador and spy at the conference. Numayri did not even send anybody to attend the conference of the Arab ministers of foreign affairs and of economy.

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[Question] What is the nature of the relations between President Numayri's regime and President al-Sadat's regime?

[Answer] Numayri has also tried to play the game of blackmail in regard to the issue of loyalty to Egypt and the historical relations that tie Sudan to Egypt so as to enable al-Sadat to perform the role assigned to him in the Arab area and Africa. But this game which is being played by al-Sadat and Numayri will not prolong the life of Numayri's regime.

The Egyptian army present in Sudan will not accept acting as an instrument of suppression against the Sudanese masses when the Sudanese people and army stage their uprising, because this Egyptian army understands well the dimensions of the historic position that the Sudanese army and the Sudanese people took in support of Egypt's army and people during the Arab wars against the Zionist entity.

Dunqulah Base

[Question] What is Egypt's military role in Sudan?

[Answer] Our people know that al-Sadat and Numayri have been planning for a time to set up a huge military base in the city of Dunqulah in northern Sudan. Dunqulah is the center of a major circle whose circumference passes through Cairo, the Sudanese-Libyan borders, Chad and Sudan's borders with Ethiopia, Eritrea and the Red Sea.

Al-Sadat imagines that this base, which is being built currently, will protect him when the Egyptian army rises inside Egypt and that the base will also prevent toppling his ally in Sudan. If this base is completed, the number of Egyptian troops in Sudan may reach 50,000 soldiers.

We know that this is a serious pitfall. Whenever a new force comes, it will need to be reinforced by another force and so on, and that whenever new tasks are assigned to such forces outside Egypt, then these tasks will expand and lead to other tasks.

Embroiding the Egyptian army in Sudan will not be in the interest of either al-Sadat or Numayri, especially if the national movement in Egypt and Sudan manages to embody the slogan of the unity of the common Arab struggle between the two countries in practical forms and in daily action. The unity of the two peoples of the Nile Valley within the framework of the unity of the Arab struggle is a historical must for foiling the roles assigned to the two of them [presumably meaning the two presidents] as part of the imperialist-Zionist plan in the area. This unity is also necessary to prevent them from entrenching regionalism in the two countries and from inciting the spirit of hostility between the two peoples in their attempt to preserve their regimes.

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The Sudanese people can see the Egyptian army being embroiled in the on-going struggle between them and Numayri's isolated regime. They can also see that al-Sadat is protecting Numayri with the Egyptian army's bayonets. However, our people are aware that this action is as much aimed against Egypt and its people as it is aimed against them. They are also aware that this is an imperialist-Zionist plan against both Egypt and Sudan and against the entire Arab nation. British colonialism engaged in this game more than 80 years ago, and throughout the first half of the 20th century when Egypt was a British protectorate. The British stationed Egyptian troops in 'Abbas and Tawfiq camps in the vicinity of Khartoum, alleging that Sudan was an Egyptian-British colony whereas both Egypt and Sudan were in the grip of the British.

The answer of the Egyptian and Sudanese people to this game was the revolution of 1924 in which both the Egyptian and Sudanese armies took part. Thus was produced the slogan of the unity of the Nile Valley and of the common struggle--the slogan that was crowned with the July 1952 revolution in Egypt and with Sudan's independence in 1956. Today as in the past, there is no answer to the plot other than the unity of the two peoples and of the progressive national movement in both countries against the two lackey regimes.

Sudanese Events

[Question] What exactly happened in Sudan after al-Sadat concluded his agreement with Begin?

[Answer] A series of unionist and vocational strikes were staged in Sudan prior to the visit of disgrace. These strikes have continued since then and have not stopped yet. For example, there are the strikes of technicians, doctors, accountants, teachers, railroad workers, x-ray technicians, textile workers, bank employees and the strikes of many of the private sector workers and employees. The regime tried to keep these strikes within their unionist framework but then quickly admitted the presence of political backgrounds behind them.

Large demonstrations were staged in Khartoum after al-Sadat's visit to the occupied Palestine and then after conclusion of the two Camp David accords. The demonstrations started with students but then quickly drew the Sudanese man in the street. This is what happened in all the demonstrations that were staged or the rallies that were held. They all turned against Numayri, al-Sadat and the capitulationist line. This is in addition to tens of statements in which the unionist and popular organizations expressed their positions of denunciation and condemnation.

A number of coup attempts and of violent armed operations were also staged against the regime--all of which were explicitly or implicitly admitted by the regime. All the attempts and operations were of a progressive national character.

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As for the Sudanese citizen, he considers Numayri's position one of disgrace. The government has never been able to proceed along the capitulationist line, not even when the Nation's Party was a partner in the government in 1967. Since 1967, the image of the Sudanese people in the entire world has been linked with the Khartoum No's. Those rejectionist No's would not have been wrenched from the Khartoum summit had not hundreds of thousands of people besieged the conference throughout its convocation, shouting the No's and almost dictating them to the conference.

Role of Ba'th Party

[Question] What is the Ba'th Party's role throughout the phases of the popular struggle in Sudan?

[Answer] Beginning in 1965, the party formed the two societies of the Palestinian Revolution Supporters and the Arab Youth Units Supporting the Resistance. The Committee to Defend the Arab Homeland was also formed in Sudan shortly before the June [1967] aggression. This committee included all the national and pan-Arab political forces and figures and engaged in extensive activities

You perhaps remember that the statements which Numayri issued in his first days, namely on 25 May 1969, were almost copied from the statements of the Committee to Defend the Arab Homeland, in an attempt to win over the rejectionist masses. Numayri projected himself then as being against the capitulationist solutions and against the political solution. This is obvious in Numayri's early statements.

Numayri's regime was compelled to do this at the beginning, but shortly afterwards, this regime proceeded according to a plan that tried to tame the masses. The most serious link in this plan was the trial of the Black September Organization Fedayeen in 1973. But this plan failed.

The reaction of the Sudanese man in the street to the visit of disgrace and to what followed it, especially after the Baghdad summit, and the reactions with which the regime is confronted daily are the biggest proof of the failure of this plan in Sudan.

Political Alliances

[Question] Is there coordination between the Ba'th Party in Sudan and al-Sharif Husayn al-Hindi and the other sides in the Sudanese national movement?

[Answer] The thing that I want to stress is that we in the Socialist Arab Ba'th Party follow up the march of the Democratic Unionist Party and that we influenced certain points of development in this march.

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The party adopted openly in the past positions against the National Front which included the Nation's Party and the Muslim Brotherhood, considering that this front is not the objective alternative to Numayri's regime. We do not accept that our country and our people continue to be turned in vicious circles.

During the first military regime between 1958 and 1964, Sudan faced a military dictatorship led by Major General 'Abbud. At the time, a front was formed and included the Nation's Party, the Muslim Brotherhood, the Unionists and the Communist Party. The Sudanese people continued to struggle for 6 years. When the Sudanese people rose against Lieutenant General [sic] 'Abbud in 1964, the plan to foil the revolution started 10 days later, and matters returned to the pre-coup situation as if Sudan had been in a freezer.

This is evidence of the absence of the strategic dimension in the national struggle of some sides in the national movement. These sides tied the issue of democracy and liberties to form only and devoided it of its meaning. These sides also failed to tie themselves to a social or pan-Arab dimension and disregarded the fact that 'Abbud's regime was nothing but the military facade for the predominant social forces.

Will our people allow, after Numayri's regime disappears, the civilian facade of the semi-feudalist and bourgeois right that is connected with the international capitalist market and with the capitulationist line in the Arab area and in the Third World as a whole--will our people permit this facade to play again the role of the reserve for the military facade represented in Numayri and to play the same role again through a civilian dictatorship.

We believe that this is tantamount to turning in a vicious circle. The right consists of interests and connection and has facades, some civilian and some military. The struggle that may take place between these facades consists of secondary conflicts that should not preoccupy the national struggle movement, on which this movement should not rely and in which it should not be a party.

This is why we considered the National Front in its previous form, which lasted from 1969 to 1977, a form meant to defuse the national struggle and to waste the Sudanese people's sacrifices. Therefore, when the reconciliation was started, when the Democratic Unionist Party refused to be involved in it and when al-Sharif al-Hindi put forth his debilitating conditions, we considered this a good sign of the possibility of restating the historical national unity.

With its legacy and its background, the Democratic Unionist Party has always been a patriotic party. Its fundamental problem has been the fact that it relied on the Nation's Party at times because its ability to operate under the conditions of underground struggle was poor. Moreover, this party was

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not able to establish brigades and create forms of solidarity and interaction with al-Ansar. The Democratic Unionist Party's cooperation with the Nation's Party made it possible for the latter to gain more ability to continue its domination of al-Ansar masses and to obstruct the ability of these masses to produce new leaderships from within al-Ansar themselves--leaderships tied to the interests of al-Ansar and upholding the legacy of al-Mahdi revolution which was led in the past century by Imam Muhammad Ahmad al-Mahdi and which had a historical Arab and Islamic dimension.

We call for the meeting of all the progressive national forces in Sudan and we stress the importance of making a distinction between al-Ansar masses and the Nation's Party. Al-Ansar are a fundamental part of the flowing current of national struggle extending from al-Mahdi's revolution with its clear pan-Arab dimension, which was embodied in many things of which I will mention only one, namely that al-Mahdi's revolution was not restricted to Sudan and that al-Mahdi also sought to liberate Egypt. This is why he issued his orders that Gordon, the British general, be taken alive so as to exchange him for 'Arabi, the Egyptian patriotic leader, whom al-Mahdi wanted to lead his army to liberate Egypt. When Gordon was killed, al-Mahdi's army proceeded toward Egypt without 'Arabi. This is an indivisible part of al-Ansar's heritage of national and pan-Arab struggle.

Colonialism planned to isolate al-Ansar from the modern national movement after re-conquering Sudan, and the national movement was not able to extend bridges toward this heritage and these masses and, consequently, this movement has grown in isolation from this heritage. This is a historical mistake that must be corrected someday. The progressive nature of any regime will depend on such a regime's ability to fully touch off the capabilities of al-Ansar and to transform these capabilities into a part of the capabilities of the national struggle for wiping out backwardness and subservience, and for solidarity with the Arab revolutionary movement. This is a long march, but it has begun.

Sudan and International Struggle

[Question] What about the premeditated intentions to transform Sudan into an arena of international struggle?

[Answer] If some parties in the national movement think that the reply to Numayri's subservience and to his ties with al-Sadat lies in their seeking another international wall on which to rely, then they are participating, want it or not, in Numayri's new game--namely the game of international balances--through which Numayri is trying to prolong the life of his regime by turning Sudan into an arena of international struggle. Moreover, the game of international struggle takes the threads out of the hands of the Sudanese holding these threads. This game will have no national dimension and will not care much if Sudan turns into another Lebanon or not. It is a game that is governed by consideration concerned exclusively with the international strategies and the international interests of the foreign sides that enter the arena of struggle.

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I believe that the national movement is capable of struggling against this alliance in Sudan through solidarity with the Arab revolutionary movement and without transforming this struggle into a form of retaliation that may turn Sudan into an arena of the international struggle.

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Photo Caption: Game of Balances Will Not Protect Numayri for Long. [Photo is presumably that of Badr-al-Din Mudaththar, official of Sudanese Socialist Arab Ba'th Party.]

Popular Movements Threaten Regime

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[Article by Badr al-Hajj: "What Is Happening in Sudan Now; al-Khamasin Winds Fill Numayri's Khartoum; Life of Regime Is Measured by Days and Weeks in Wake of Recent Political and Popular Movements"]

[Text] President Ja'far Muhammad Numayri's regime will celebrate this May its 10th anniversary. But the celebration this year is engulfed in grief and may turn out to be the last celebration, because the regime finds itself once more in an insurmountable dilemma after having lost the ability to continue the game of balances in which it has engaged for the past few years.

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What is happening in Sudan now?

All the information and signs indicate that President Numayri's regime finds itself once again at the end of a cul-de-sac. This review of the regime's current problems confirms that a miracle is required for salvation at a time when the age of miracles in Sudan seems to have ended.

Sudan is witnessing these days mysterious events which, in fact, constitute a part of the struggle of the centers of power that entwine with and intersect the popular movements. Confusion in and armed forces circles, chaos and fear have become familiar now, especially after the announcement about the uncovering of more than five coup attempts against the present regime.

The Egyptian intelligence points the fingers of accusation for everything small and big to the Sudanese army, because it is the effective force capable of eliminating the existing regime. This is why the Sudanese view with great doubt and suspicion the mysterious incidents that are taking place in the army. The death of Colonel Bakhuraybah, the officer in charge of Khartoum security, has not been the last of the mysterious events. The plane of Colonel Bakhuraybah blew up in al-Abyad area in western Sudan and he was killed with a number of other officers.

As for the story of the discovery of large quantities of arms which the Sudanese authorities recently announced, these weapons have been "endorsed" against the Sudanese armed forces. The Sudanese security agencies allege that the discovered weapons, which include light and heavy weapons and medium artillery, were stolen from the armed forces warehouses to be used politically against the regime. Sudanese military sources say that the Egyptian intelligence uncovered the weapons theft to the Sudanese intelligence. The army was alerted, the search for the weapons began and some of them were found in eastern Sudan.

The position of the Egyptian intelligence caused resentment among the Sudanese security agencies and armed forces. Protests against the Egyptian presence began to escalate, especially when the discovery of the arms was coupled with the arrest of 36 officers and noncommissioned officers from western Sudan.

There are those who link the discovery of the weapons, the recent coup attempts and the assassination [sic] of Colonel Bakhuraybah with the assassination attempt made against Numayri's life on the 8th of last March. The new information acquired by AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI on this incident says that the explosion which occurred in the ammunition dump of the Sudanese armed forces in the town of Niyala in western Sudan was not accidental, as the Sudanese security agencies tried to make the public opinion believe.

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Informed Sudanese sources say that the Sudanese security forces have arrested Colonel Adam Kir and a number of his colleague officers. They have also transferred the acting commander of the Niyala garrison to Shandi. These sources add that investigations have proven that a time-bomb was planted and set to go off at 0500 during President Numayri's review of the garrison forces, but that Numayri's late arrival foiled the plan. After this attempt, Numayri's security agency asked the top officials and the ministers to keep the news of their movement and of their appointments secret. On the eve of Numayri's return from Britain, the ministers were asked not to stay in their homes for fear of being subjected to assassination attempts.

The latest arrest campaigns, the repeated demonstrations and incidents in the south and in the north and the tense situation on Sudan's borders with Uganda, Ethiopia, Chad and others, in addition to the crises of hunger, supply bottlenecks and the unavailability of fuel, have created in Sudan a situation unprecedented in the worst reactionary eras. Matters have been made worse by the presence of tens of thousands of Egyptian officers and troops.

Expected Changes

In this situation, all observers feel that Sudan is at the threshold of fundamental changes in the present regime--changes that may turn out to be the last in this regime's life.

After Numayri's failure to win the southerners over to his side, observers fear that Numayri may resort to striking the south under the pretext of ending the Ethiopian foreign intervention in the area. This inclination is encouraged by the Egyptians supervising the security conditions of Numayri's regime. Something of the sort did happen in recent weeks when the Egyptians informed the Sudanese leadership that the Ethiopian forces were mobilizing troops and weapons on the Sudanese borders in preparation for an extensive attack. The Egyptians requested that Sudan launch a preemptive attack in retaliation. But after carrying out reconnaissance operations on the instructions of 'Umar al-Tayyib, the official in charge of the Sudanese security agency, it became evident that the Egyptian allegations were unfounded and that the aim of al-Sadat's officers was to mire Sudan again in a new war with the aim of bolstering the Egyptian presence in Sudan and of making this presence the decisive force on all matters and problems in East Africa.

Incidents of Corruption

One of the reasons for complaint and resentment at the popular and political levels in Sudan is the corruption that has become pervasive at all levels. The Sudanese man in the street tells of laughter-and-tear-evoking anecdotes and incidents concerning the high-ranking officials.

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One of these incidents is the incident of restoring Basil Bishara's property to him on a decree issued by President Numayri himself. There are also the acts attributed to Abu al-Qasim Muhammad Ibrahim, the vice president, which are incompatible with the Sudanese ethics and morals and the acts attributed to Fatimah al-Shaykh Mahmud, the minister of social affairs, who is accused of seizing 180,000 pounds sterling of the ministry's funds on the day she was dismissed from her position. President Numayri's defense of this minister at the meeting of the General Council of the Socialist Union was received with protests, ridicule and resentment.

The shaky position of President Numayri's regime is embodied in the nature of the relations binding the regime's leaders--relations built on apprehension, fear and caution.

Abu al-Qasim's Axis

There is information indicating that Abu al-Qasim Muhammad Ibrahim, the vice president, is currently forming a military axis by reviving the so-called Khawr 'Umar Sergeants, who are considered the leaders of the 25 May 1969 movement which brought Numayri to power, and that Abu al-Qasim has the support and backing of President al-Sadat with the aim of removing President Numayri and of holding him responsible for the deteriorating situation.

On the other hand, it has been noticed that President Numayri began recently to get closer to the high-ranking officers of the armed forces with the aim of gaining their friendship, especially the officers opposed to the axis of Abu al-Qasim.

The struggle has also spread to the Socialist Union. While Numayri's group, consisting of people such as 'Abd-al-Rahman 'Abdallah and Mahdi Mustafa, is trying to increase its influence within the brittle structure of the Socialist Union, al-Rashid al-Tahir Bakr is, on the other hand, nurturing the differences within the Socialist Union and spreading an atmosphere of panic over the presence of foreign forces threatening to invade Sudan. The struggle has further extended to the security agencies that prepare conflicting reports on the actions, behavior and inclinations of Numayri's top aides.

Moreover, a sharp confrontation is escalating between 'Abd-al-Majid Hamid Khalil, the chief of the Sudanese staff, and 'Abd-al-Wahhab Ibrahim, the official in charge of security and the former minister of interior, as a result of the latter's demand that the domestic security forces be equipped with antiaircraft and anti-tank weapons--a demand which the chief of staff considers one that undermines the army's powers.

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Escalating National and Labor Movement

At the time when conflicts are escalating within the regime itself, the popular movement is expanding day after day. In the past 3 years, this movement resorted to underground activity, and a broad alliance has been formed among all the nationalist factions in preparation for declaring the comprehensive civilian insurgence capable of toppling the regime.

President Numayri fears the rise in the tempo of the workers strikes, because Sudan is experiencing a serious economic situation. The treasury is empty of any foreign currency reserves, and this is why the Sudanese government has sought the help of the IMF to lend it the third installment of the aid agreed upon on a guarantee from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The government has also sought the help of the United States and asked it to deliver the wheat consignment provided for by U.S. aid.

Sudan is also suffering from a crushing fuel crisis that has extended to the armed forces. Numayri admitted the presence of this crisis in his latest speech. There is also definite information that indicates that Numayri is currently negotiating with a number of Arab states to guarantee him so that he may purchase oil from other countries.

The Sudanese nationalist forces attach great hopes to the fact that the pan-Arab socio-economic dimension is the prime mover of the struggle of the Sudanese against the current regime. All these forces, with most of their inclinations, find themselves in a united position against the present regime, which has become fully isolated from the people. The phenomenon that has drawn attention recently is that the regime's agencies have focused their police and propaganda campaigns against the Ba'th Party. This confirms that this party with its pan-Arab inclinations is engaging in extensive activities and has broad popular bases in Sudan. It is the first pan-Arab party that has been able to establish throughout the past 20 years firm popular bases in an African Arab country.

Numayri's Campaign Against Ba'thists

Before Numayri announced the severance of his diplomatic relations with Iraq, an extensive campaign of arrests was staged against members of the Ba'th Party. Lawyer Adam Abu Jubbah and al-Lazim al-Zayn, the former candidate in the Abu Zayd election district, were arrested, in addition to all the members of the Congress for the Development of Western Kordofan. The Sudanese authorities have alleged that they found pamphlets published by the party in the possession of Lawyer Abu Jubbah.

The information of the Sudanese security agencies indicates that the opposition to the regime is centered in the area of western Sudan in particular. This opposition has reached the degree that made a judge in the

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area comment sarcastically on the arrest of a citizen there by saying: "All the citizens of the town of al-Nuhud--in western Sudan--belong to the Ba'th Party."

Problems of Supporting al-Sadat

The troubles Numayri escalated particularly after his position of support for the Camp David accords and for al-Sadat-Begin treaty at a time when all the political and national forces, perhaps with the exclusion of the Muslim Brotherhood, reject the accords and the treaty.

This support has further isolated the regime. When the regime became aware of this isolation, it tried to back down, but the attempt was too late. The General Secretariat of the People's Assembly distributed a statement, which President Numayri was supposed to deliver on his return from Britain, justifying the official support for al-Sadat policy. The statement said that Sudan supported the Egyptian president on the basis of not rejecting the principle of negotiations and of the peaceful solution.

The statement then went on to add that Sudan rejects any Egyptian-Israeli agreement that fails to guarantee liberation of the land and restoration of the rights of the Palestinians.

The observers linked this tactical position on the part of the General Secretariat of the People's Assembly to another position taken by Numayri, when he refused to stop over in Cairo to meet with al-Sadat, as he had been expected to do on his return from Britain to Sudan. This position on the part of Numayri was considered tantamount to shaking the stick in the face of al-Sadat, who had begun to flirt openly with Abu al-Qasim Ibrahim, the Sudanese vice president.

Arab-Sudanese Contacts

This belief was bolstered after the contacts said to have been conducted by Sudanese officials with Arab officials in Switzerland to assure these Arab officials that Sudan's position is in fact opposed to the Egyptian-Israeli agreement and that the Arab sides misinterpreted the Sudanese position. The Sudanese officials also requested that aid be advanced to help Numayri correct the Sudanese position and to assure him that no Arab regimes are working to overthrow him.

In addition to the contacts held in Switzerland, a high-level Sudanese delegation led by Abu al-Qasim Hashim, the People's Assembly speaker, visits Britain with the aim of contacting al-Sharif al-Hindi, the leader of the Democratic Unionist Party, and al-Sadiq al-Mahdi to present to them a so-called new national charter outlining a new structure of government.

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During these meetings, the Sudanese officials project a theory to the effect that Sudan cannot withstand political, military or social upheaval. They insist on the need for dialogue with the opposition so as to find a solution to the current dilemma into which the government has fallen. Abu al-Qasim Hashim tried to present a new opinion to justify Numayri's policy of support for al-Sadat by saying that Numayri is very apprehensive of the current regime in Ethiopia and of the Soviet position and that, therefore, he had to support al-Sadat's policy.

The opposition leaders and people living outside Sudan believe that Numayri's dispatch of this delegation to Britain was a final attempt to save his regime. They are fully aware of the goals and objectives of this attempt and, therefore, it is unlikely that they will fall into its snares.

Al-Sharif al-Hindi's Position

Al-Sharif al-Hindi believes that the current regime is as good as dead. The leader of the Democratic Union [sic] sums up his position vis-a-vis the present Sudanese regime in the following:

This regime has been exposed to the Arab regimes, especially the liberationist regimes. This regime's real character has also become exposed to all its neighbors in Africa.

The biggest insult directed at the Sudanese army is the presence of al-Sadat's armed forces inside Sudan, whether for the purpose of protecting the regime or that of protecting the Sudanese borders, especially since the Sudanese [sic] forces have left their positions opposite the Israeli forces.

Al-Sharif Husayn al-Hindi is considered one of the most prominent leaders opposed to the regime. He leads thousands of al-Ansar who have been trained inside and outside Sudan. He is also the object of Numayri's constant attacks.

The regime's isolation and mistakes have forced one of the regime's strong allies, namely al-Sadiq al-Mahdi, the leader of the Nation's Party, to abandon his alliance with Numayri and to leave Sudan. Al-Mahdi lives in London currently but refrains from addressing severe public criticism to Numayri.

Attempt To Win Over Southerners

In addition to the reconciliation attempts made by the regime's officials, Numayri has also tried to win southern Sudan over to his side. There is definite information that indicates that Numayri is trying at present to replace Joseph Lagu, the number one official in the local government in the south, by another southerner who would lend him more support. But the attempt has so far been confronted with the opposition of the southerners.

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It is said that Numayri has summoned a southerner who previously occupied the post of minister and who is presently in Britain to present to him the idea of returning to Sudan. But it is unlikely that the former southern official will respond to these inducements. Informed sources say that Numayri's attempts to win over the southerners to his side started after it became clear that there is a broad alliance which includes the southerners, the northerners and the national forces to topple the present regime and set up a democratic regime.

Numayri's problems have escalated with the increasing flow of refugees from Eritrea and Uganda to Sudan. As for Eritrea, the present regime in Khartoum may have to pay dearly for any position against the Eritrean revolution because of the readiness of the Eritrean revolutionaries to cooperate with the Sudanese national movement. On the other hand, the new situation in Uganda--a situation considered to be in support of Numayri's policy--requires time to strike roots. Moreover, the tens of thousands of Muslim Ugandan refugees have added new burdens to Sudan.

Chronic Economic Problems

The Sudanese economy is the worst problem of all, because this economy is characterized by reliance on one commodity, namely cotton, which constitutes 57 percent of Sudan's exports. This economy also suffers from a permanent deficit in the balance of payments. If a meager economic surplus appears, it is absorbed by the foreign firms or goes to the parasitic classes and the state's bureaucratic apparatus. The recent strikes, in which the middle classes formed the backbone, are nothing but a reflection of the grave harm caused to the interests of these classes, thus turning them into classes opposed to the regime and allied with the Sudanese national movement.

It is obvious from a quick glance at the Sudanese economy that the poor of Sudan shoulder the burden of the costs of the state apparatus, of the services and of the abortive development projects. Taxes form 87 percent of the total revenues. The indirect taxes alone constitute 58.6 percent of these revenues. These taxes are reflected directly in the high prices of the essential commodities, such as sugar. This unfair distribution of the taxes which exempts the capitalist groups from meeting their obligations explains the backward inclination of the regime. Whereas the appropriations allocated for such social services as education, health, welfare and housing amounted to 13.8 percent of the 1971-72 budget, these appropriations dropped to 9.8 percent in the 1977-78 budget.

As for the economic services, which include agriculture, irrigation, electric power, transportation, communications, industry, trade, supply and mining, the appropriations made for these services in the 1971-72 budget amounted to nearly 14.2 percent of that budget. In 1977-78, these appropriations dropped to 12.1 percent. Whereas the actual expenditures of the state

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apparatus amounted to nearly 153.3 million pounds in 1971-72, these expenditures jumped in the estimated budget of 1977-78 to 489.4 million pounds, or more than 300 percent. This sum represents 25 percent of the gross national income, taking into consideration the drop in the value of the Sudanese pound. This is aside from the extravagance embodied in the expenses of the high-ranking officials. It is worth noting that the costs of the African summit conference which was held in Khartoum have been estimated at more than 50 million pounds.

In addition to all this, the debts that exhaust the Sudanese economy exceed 1 billion dollars. This figure is the equivalent of 34 percent of the gross national production. These debts have compelled the regime to resort to short-term loans at high interest rates and on unfair terms. As a result, one third the value of the exports goes for repaying the loan installments and exorbitant interest.

Observers believe that the prominent opposition leaders living abroad think that the collapsing political and economic situation in Sudan opens the door for changing the existing regime, because the ghost of hunger and the fuel and supply crises threaten the regime, not to mention the political and popular opposition.

Who knows what will happen if Numayri's isolated regime goes.

The change in Sudan may open the opportunity for more than one change in the African political map and Cairo may perhaps be, as usual, the first to be affected by the hot winds coming from the south.

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Egyptian-Israeli Treaty

Paris AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI in Arabic 4-10 May 79 pp 18-19

[Article by Political Editor: "From May 1969 to May 1979: Tightrope Walker Loses Balance; Egyptian-Israeli Treaty Has Put President Numayri Face to Face With Hard Choice"]

[Text] The political observer must be astonished by President Numayri's ability to continue to play the game of domestic, Arab and African balances throughout a record period, when this period is compared to the life of individualistic regimes in the Third World.

When President Numayri staged his military coup in this same month of 1969, he relied on the Nasirist, pan-Arab and communist forces.

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Politically, Numayri followed, especially at the Arab level, a course strongly influenced by the national and pan-Arab line adopted by the late President Jamal 'Abd-al-Nasir in Egypt. However, this course put Numayri in a confrontation with the conventional and conservative forces in Sudan, and he embarked on a bloody round against these forces, emerging from it a winner, but only barely, after the death of Imam al-Hadi al-Mahdi, the spiritual leader of al-Ansar group.

Perhaps hundreds of thousands of Egyptians and Arabs who took part in the funeral of the late President Jamal 'Abd-al-Nasir remember how Numayri could not control himself and wept in grief for the man he had considered his model in political action.

Hard Experience With Communists

In 1971, Numayri waged another bloody experience. He faced this time a coup attempt perpetrated by the Sudanese Communist Party, which was considered at the time the strongest, best organized and most popular Marxist party in the Arab world.

By a stroke of luck, the coup failed. Its failure was helped by the fact that the plane of Hashim al-'Ata, the coup leader, landed in Libya while enroute from London to Khartoum.

When Numayri regained his power after a short detention, he embarked on a comprehensive military and civilian liquidation of the popular frameworks and bases.

Since then, Numayri has been swerving gradually from his national and pan-Arab line, even though he formed a political organization similar to the one existing in Egypt at the time (the Socialist Union),. However, this organization became very much like a government party or like the political facades devoid of any content, especially after Numayri's disagreement with his colleagues the Nasirist officers and the officers with pan-Arab inclinations.

This transformation in the Sudanese political leadership was accompanied by the transformation that was taking place in the Egyptian political leadership--a transformation in the direction of severing this leadership's relations and ties with the Soviet Union and of establishing ties with the West, with the United States in particular.

As a result, President Numayri's regime has frequently found itself in political dilemmas and crises with the radical Arab regimes, especially in Iraq and Libya. This regime refrained from taking part in the Confederation of Arab Republics (Egypt, Libya and Syria), even symbolically. It was Numayri's good fortune that the confederation did not live long and that Libya's attention was diverted from the confederation by its constant differences with al-Sadat's regime in Egypt.

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Game of Balances

The alternative that President Numayri's regime followed was the alternative of playing the game of Arab and African balances. More than one example can be cited regarding this line which the Sudanese regime has followed in recent years.

In Africa, Sudan recognized Mengistu Haile Mariam's Marxist regime in Ethiopia in an attempt to appease the Soviet Union and Cuba after the victories that these two countries scored in the Horn of Africa. This rapprochement started in 1977 after the well-known estrangement with the Soviets. As a result of this rapprochement, pressures on and harassment of the Eritrean revolution, for which Sudan is considered the natural breathing space, started.

Khartoum's argument in support of this rapprochement was that it feared that Ethiopia would proceed to support the non-Arab southern Sudanese and create problems for the regime.

Rapprochement With Libya

In the Arab arena, President Numayri tried ceaselessly to improve the relations with Libya at a time when he had good relations with Saudi Arabia. Diplomatic relations were actually restored with Libya in February 1978, and the improvement in relations reached the degree of cooperation in finding a solution for the issue of domestic conflict in Chad, the country neighboring both Sudan and Libya.

Numayri's aim behind this new approach toward Libya was to acquire material aid after it became evident to him that the aid he was getting from Saudi Arabia and from the Gulf states was insufficient.

Numayri also wanted to hit another bird with the same stone, considering that al-Sadiq al-Mahdi and al-Sharif Husayn al-Hindi had set up camps for their staunch supporters in Libya and that they had staged a coup in 1976 which would have toppled Numayri had it not been for President al-Sadat's assistance.

President Numayri also played this game of balances at the domestic political level, trying to make up for his popular base. He exerted efforts with Saudi Arabia to make it persuade al-Sadiq al-Mahdi, the leader of the Nation's Party, to reach reconciliation with Numayri within the framework of an ambitious plan for national detente under the slogan of "reconciliation."

The game of balances also included the south. President Numayri reinstated Joseph Lagu, his old friend and colleague, in power in the self-rule administration in the south. Lagu was the man who concluded with President Numayri the self-rule agreement for the south in 1972.

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Through this tactical gesture, Numayri guaranteed the cooperation and satisfaction of both Ethiopia and Uganda which supported the "Anyanya" revolutionaries in the south. At the same time, the Sudanese regime maintained its good and firm relations with President al-Sadat's regime. The two regimes took simultaneous steps to strengthen their pro-Western and pro-U.S. inclinations and ties. Their coordination reached the degree of raising the slogan of the Nile Valley unity which had been raised in both countries in the first half of this century in the face of the British colonialism. This slogan was folded during the time of the late President Jamal 'Abd-al-Nasir who replaced it by the slogan of Arab unity.

It seems obvious that many things unite the two regimes in Egypt and Sudan. In addition to their pro-Western sympathies, they had common doubts concerning the policies of Libya, Ethiopia and the Soviets.

Sudanese Regime's Dilemma

The critical dilemma in which President Numayri finds himself today is the result of his inability to continue to play this game of balances in the wake of the final estrangement between the Arabs and al-Sadat's regime following al-Sadat's conclusion of the separate peace treaty with Israel. At the outset of the disagreement which erupted between the Arabs and al-Sadat in the wake of the latter's initiative of visiting the Knesset in 1977, Numayri raised the slogan of Arab solidarity, hoping to keep Mu'awiyah's hair that tied the Arab capitals to Cairo from breaking so that he may be able to maintain his outwardly balanced relations with both sides.

But when his position was subjected to the test in the Baghdad summit, which also raised the slogan of "minimum" Arab solidarity, Numayri abandoned his slogan and sided with al-Sadat. Moreover, Numayri did not hesitate to support al-Sadat after the latter concluded the treaty. Numayri thus moved against the wishes of all the domestic political forces with which he had reached reconciliation. All these forces opposed the treaty, except for the Muslim Brotherhood.

When Numayri was subjected to Arab and domestic pressures, he made "a half" retreat by beating around the bush insofar as the meaning and significance of this support for al-Sadat is concerned. But Numayri did not in fact change his position of alignment with al-Sadat. Despite all this, the process of shuffling back and forth has not saved Numayri from facing the decisive option. This is something that is hard and difficult for a regime that relies in its survival on the big stick of President al-Sadat while relying for its strength on what the rich Arab countries give it.

President Numayri was fortunate in the past when he survived more than one attempt to topple him by sheer accident and miracles. But the miracle required today is not needed just to rescue him, but also to guarantee his regime's stability. If the Egyptian forces are doing this today, it is

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difficult for him to continue to live under their protection in the future at a time when almost all the political forces and most of the popular forces are moving against him.

Sudan's Numayri is nowadays very much like a wounded tiger in a jungle full of opponents and enemies that have been united by only one agreement, namely the agreement to get rid of him. Perhaps what tempts these enemies is that they have discovered after 10 years of Numayri's domination that he is a paper tiger.

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Sudanese-Egyptian Integration Explored

Paris AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI in Arabic 4-10 May 79 p 20

[Article: "Al-Sadat's Isolation Completes Numayri's Isolation"]

[Text] Cairo--At a time when Numayri's regime has become a heavy burden to President al-Sadat, the Sudanese receive with suspicion Egypt's attempts to dust off the slogan of the "unity of the Nile Valley"--a slogan which President 'Abd-al-Nasir shelved in the early 1950's.

Egypt dispatched in the past few days new reinforcements for its forces that are currently present in Sudan after receiving information about the deteriorating situation there and about President Ja'far Muhammad Numayri's exposure to several coup attempts.

Information received from Khartoum indicates that the Egyptian leadership is trying to persuade President Numayri to employ the services of Egyptian officers and to station these officers, along with their units, in place of the Sudanese officers and units positioned in strategic centers around Khartoum and Omdurman.

Some observers here do not find it unlikely that President al-Sadat is planning, on agreement with the U.S. agencies concerned, to remove President Numayri from power finally and to seek the help of some old Sudanese faces that used to cooperate with the Egyptian regime.

But changing the deteriorated situation in Sudan will have its big impact not only on the area of East Africa but also on the Arab-Zionist conflict and on the situation in Egypt in particular. These things have become acknowledged facts in the Egyptian policy. This is why it can be noticed that President al-Sadat is pushing forth with his efforts to establish in Sudan a political situation that is absolutely supportive of his policy.

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Cairo-Khartoum Axis

The isolation under which the Egyptian regime is living has made this regime turn southward to strengthen the Cairo-Khartoum axis. Consequently, the slogan of the "unity of the Nile" which has remained asleep since the inception of the July 1952 revolution has now been dusted off.

For some time now, the information media have been engaged in an extensive campaign in which they say that Egypt and Sudan represent more than "one half the Arabs," meaning that the two countries can live without any need for the rest of the Arabs. This explains why the drums have been beating for the so-called integration projects between the two countries.

A mammoth demonstration, represented in holding the joint meeting of the Egyptian and Sudanese legislative councils in Khartoum, was staged last January. However, this visit [presumably by President al-Sadat who addressed the joint meeting] did not enable the Egyptian regime to open a single gap in the wall of escalating isolation surrounding it in the Arab homeland and in the Third World.

On the one hand, it is well known that Khartoum University met the Egyptian president's visit with loud demonstrations raising slogans and signs hostile to al-Sadat and to the entire course that led Egypt to Camp David and to Israel's bosom. The student demonstrations were repeated on 11 February, and the students shouted slogans cheering Khomeyni and hostile to the Egyptian president.

On the other hand, a number of Sudanese deputies opposed to President Numayri expressed the view that the meeting of the two People's Assemblies to discuss the issue of integration had produced extremely feeble resolutions. The Sudanese government was not able to publish even these feeble resolutions in English under the heading of "Integration" and used another word, namely Complementation, to describe the resolutions, so as to avoid angering the southern Sudanese deputies who had their reservations on the resolutions issued by the joint meeting.

Sudan Is Not Guaranteed

In any case, the political opposition currents in Sudan expressed strong reservations about the paragraphs in President al-Sadat's speech stressing Egypt's African responsibilities and the extension of these responsibilities to the Gulf area. The Sudanese opposition felt that with his convulsive and uncalculated outbursts, al-Sadat could involve Sudan in adventures against Africa or Arab countries and in battles in which the Sudanese have no stake whatsoever.

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Perhaps this was not the opinion of the opposition alone, and it is not unlikely that this opinion is supported by some of President Numayri's aides themselves. Therefore, Sudan, which was the "main launching pad" on which al-Sadat stood poised to penetrate the wall of Arab isolation, is no longer a guaranteed base for the Egyptian regime.

Egypt and Sudan have been tied by an economic and political integration program since 1974 and by a mutual defense pact since 1976.

But no practical steps have been really taken to implement the said integration program for reasons connected mainly with the constant doubts that the Sudanese feel toward the Egyptians.

As for President al-Sadat, he is optimistic regarding the possibility of achieving steps on the path of this integration--steps embodied, according to the statements of some sources close to al-Sadat, in the possibility of enabling the Egyptians to make use of the vast cultivable Sudanese lands to ease the stifling agricultural and population crisis represented in the presence of 99 percent of the 40 million Egyptians on an area of land equal to 4 percent of Egypt's entire area.

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SUDAN

SUDAN MOVES BACK INTO THE FOLD

London THE MIDDLE EAST in English Jun 79 pp 12,13

[Article by Graham Benton]

[Text] With the surprise visit of a high-level Sudanese delegation to Tripoli last month, a key step towards a rapprochement has been taken which could have far-reaching implications for the political line-up in north-east Africa. At risk is Sudan's support for President Sadat's peace policy and the hitherto close relations between Khartoum and Cairo.

After the Tripoli meeting, Libya declared that the Sudanese delegations, led by Vice-President Rashid al-Taher Bakr, had endorsed the Baghdad conference resolutions condemning the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty. Certainly, President Jaafar Nimairi has back-tracked from his initial support for Sadat. Sudanese statements have been increasingly qualified by demands for the restoration of Palestinian rights. Nimairi told one Saudi paper that Egypt's acts committed only Egypt and Sudan's absence from Baghdad did not negate its commitment to the earlier resolutions of the Rabat and Algiers summits backing the PLO. Meanwhile, the Sudanese press gave unaccustomed but significant prominence to a meeting between Bakr and Fateh's Khartoum representative, Abu-Haitham Salam.

The improvement in Sudan's relations with Libya will take this process a stage further. The Tripoli talks covered both the peace treaty and Nimairi's relations with the Sudanese opposition, demonstrating how closely the two questions are linked. And if the price of this is downgrading his alliance with Egypt, he has little choice.

For years the traditional opposition - led by Sadeq al-Mahdi and Sherif Hussain al-Hindi, representing the civilian rulers overthrown by Nimairi in 1969 - have looked to Libya for support. Attempted coups in 1975 and 1976 definitely had Libyan backing, and it is hardly surprising that Nimairi turned to Egypt for help. He was also at odds with Ethiopia over Sudanese support and refuge for Eritrean guerrillas.

His mutual defence pact with Sadat, which had led to talk of integration and even unity between Sudan and Egypt, meant he was obliged to express approval first for Sadat's trip to Jerusalem in 1977, and then for the Camp David agreement and the peace treaty.

But the rationale for the alliance is becoming less obvious as the long-drawn out "National Reconciliation" with the opposition reduces Libya's ability to threaten Sudan. Moreover, Sadeq al-Mahdi opposed Sadat's peace policy and resigned in protest from the Central Committee of the Sudanese Socialist Union. If he is to be formally brought back into the administration, Nimairi can hardly continue to support Sadat.

The alliance with Sadat has exposed Sudan to the same kind of attacks from the rest of the Arab world that Egypt has had to face. Iraq has broken off diplomatic relations and called for the extension of the anti-Egypt boycott to Sudan. The angry Saudi reaction in particular alarmed Nimairi. He cannot afford to alienate either

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Khaddh which had just agreed to meet Sudan's much-needed oil requirements, or the other Gulf states which provide the greater part of Sudan's foreign aid. The shaky economy cannot survive without the help of the Arab world.

Furthermore, Nimeiri is wary of getting involved in Sadat's ambitious African plans. With a sceptical Sudanese public in mind, Sadat has spoken of Egypt's deep commitment to protecting Sudan (Egypt's "first line" of defence in Africa) against radical aggression. But Sudanese officials now prefer to talk of co-operation rather than unity and integration. They are well aware that growing Egyptian involvement in Sudanese affairs is unpopular with the opposition and with the predominantly

African southerners who constitute one of Nimeiri's strongest pillars of support.

There is a prevalent suspicion that Sadat's combative attitude towards radical forces in Africa is largely geared to winning American approval for Egypt's self-assumed role as a guardian of Western interests in the continent. Sadat's dreams have little appeal for Nimeiri, especially as al-Mahdi has assiduously pushed the alternative of Sudanese membership in the broader and looser coalition of regional non-aligned states including Libya and Ethiopia.

Identification with Egypt has become more of a liability than an asset, and circumstances are driving Nimeiri reluctantly into the arms of his old opponents for moral and material support.

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SUDAN

BRIEFS

IMF LOAN--Sudan is to become the first Third World country to receive a loan from the International Monetary Fund's Witteveen facility, set up earlier this year on the basis of agreements reached in 1977. Financing from the \$9bn facility (to which Saudi Arabia is a prime contributor) will make up part of a new Sudanese borrowing from the IMF of 200mn Special Drawing Rights (about \$255mn) to be extended over a period of three years. Sudan will be granted the funds on condition it limits domestic credit expansion and revitalises the agricultural sector. [Text] [London THE MIDDLE EAST in English Jun 79 p 112]

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SYRIA

INFORMATION MINISTER WARNS OF WAR DANGER

Paris AL-WATAN AL'ARABI in Arabic 11-17 May 79 pp 24-25

[Interview with Syria's information minister]

[Text] Syria's Information Minister Ahmad Iskandar Ahmad told AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI that work toward Iraqi-Syrian unity is progressing well, and without glossing over existing difficulties. Of the Egyptian-Israeli treaty, he said: "Al-Sadat has transformed Egypt from a bastion of Arab hope into an Arab headache." Speaking of the United States, the minister claimed that "America can neither scuttle a government nor protect one which does not enjoy the support of its people."

Ahmad Iskandar was lost to journalism when he was called to government service. He began his journalistic career as an editor for SANA, the official Syrian news agency. He was known among his colleagues as a quiet, modest and well-liked person. Among his party members, he was noted for his patriotism. As a member of the Ba'ath party, he put unity above any ideological consideration. Like many others, therefore, he suffered the 1966-70 crisis when the party came under the leadership of the faction headed by Salah Jadid.

After Hafiz al-Assad reformed the party's structure and function in 1970, Ahmad Iskandar Ahmad rose to the forefront and became chief editor of the semi-official newspaper AL-THAWRAH. He quickly gained prominence as a journalist of good style, virtuosity with words and ability to explain issues of national import. His excellent performance convinced skeptics that appointment to high office does not make a journalist, but that the secret of success lies in one's gift to write, hard work and extensive education. Thus journalism's loss with his appointment to head the Ministry of Information is the government's gain.

The following interview was given by Mr Ahmad Iskandar Ahmad, the minister, not the journalist.

[Question] In addition to the Baghdad conference resolutions, do you expect the Arabs to take similar measures against the United States, which engineered the Begin-Sadat agreement?

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[Answer] The Baghdad conference had a principal and specific goal: to protect the Arab world and to brace it against the new, aggressive military alliance resulting from al-Sadat's surrender and his decision to put Egypt in the enemy's camp.

To accomplish this goal, the first step is to contain the danger and confine it to the smallest possible area. This necessitated that the Arabs jointly announce that al-Sadat represents only himself, and that they not only condemn his action but oppose it and are determined to undo it. The Baghdad conference succeeded on this point. It confirmed that the free Arab will not succumb, and that it is able to oppose foreign pressures. The conference also made it clear that, henceforth, Arab relations with other countries will be gaged to those countries' positions with respect to the just, Arab cause. The Arabs have begun to isolate al-Sadat and his government. There is little doubt that they will take every appropriate measure to protect their interests and support the return of occupied Arab territories. Our rights must be restored in full. The Arabs will not refrain from any action that will further their just struggle.

The countries that have supported and encouraged the creation of an aggressive Egyptian-Israeli alliance have placed obstacles in the path to a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East. They have become opponents of the Arabs and their just demands. The Arabs, collectively, have no choice but to take into account the actions of these governments, which, in effect, have aligned themselves with our enemies.

The Arabs are not trying to create an artificial crisis or incur the enmity of anyone, but those who oppose a just and comprehensive peace are the enemies and must be treated as such by the Arabs.

[Question] Egyptian officials claim that severing diplomatic relations with Egypt is a symbolic gesture and that fundamental relations with Arab countries will not be affected. Any comments?

[Answer] We have no obligation to respond to lies by Egyptian officials. They are conducting an increasingly vicious campaign of lies to misguide the Egyptian people and minimize the Arab response to al-Sadat's actions. This is a clear indication that the Egyptian people deplore what al-Sadat has done and are apprehensive about the potential consequences of his surrender agreement. Egyptian officials know this and are attempting to dilute their people's anger by issuing a torrent of lies. The Baghdad resolutions and the resolutions adopted by the conference of Arab foreign and economic ministers are extremely important and will go a long way toward isolating al-Sadat's government. This will help the Arabs to contain his conspiracy and boost the Egyptian opposition in its struggle to liquidate his government.

Al-Sadat has transformed Egypt from a bastion of Arab hope into an Arab headache. This situation cannot be permitted to continue, and the Egyptian people will, inevitably, correct it.

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[Question] There are many predictions as to what might happen in the Arab world following the conclusion of the Begin-al-Sadat treaty. As an official of one of the confrontation states, Syria, what are your expectations for the future?

[Answer] The Arabs have begun to implement the resolutions of the conference of foreign and economic ministers agreed upon at the Baghdad summit meeting. The implementation of these resolutions is calculated to foil al-Sadat's conspiracy. The "surrender" treaty has turned into a military alliance between al-Sadat's government and Israel. The first goal of this alliance is to foreclose any possibility of realizing a lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East. Opposition to this alliance must continue and be gaged to developments. We must also use every Arab capacity and capability in our battle of destiny against the Zionist occupation of our lands.

[Question] When you speak of "continued opposition," do you mean that the Arabs should be prepared to confront American threats, as one example?

[Answer] The security of Arab governments depends on the degree of popular support they enjoy, and the Arab masses give their support to those governments that are dedicated to solving what the people perceive as their fundamental problems. Heading the list of these concerns is the liberation of occupied Arab land. Neither the United States nor any other government can scuttle a government which enjoys its people's support and confidence. Equally true, they cannot protect a government that is inimical to its people and their aspirations. American threats are a part and parcel of a policy of pressure tactics conducted by the imperialists to perpetuate the occupation of Arab lands. But we have rejected this policy and we will reject every pressure as we pursue the liberation of our occupied lands and the protection of Arab national interests. We shall not be intimidated or misled by phony promises.

A people that believes in the justness of its cause will always find a means to accomplish its goal, regardless of pressures. We shall defend our rights and will do what must be done to regain our occupied lands. We shall not refrain from any action that will bring us to that goal.

[Question] Presidents Carter and al-Sadat as well as Begin insist that the Egyptian-Israeli treaty will pave the way for a comprehensive settlement in the Middle East. Do you believe that and is the claim being vindicated by developments in the area?

[Answer] The "aggressive alliance," which they fraudulently describe as an Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty, is a signal for war in the area. It is a dangerous game that will bring the region to the brink of war. We will oppose this aggressive alliance until it falters and comes apart, as happened to the Baghdad Pact before it. Syria will not submit to pressure and will continue to challenge the Zionist occupation and its supporters. We have considered all conceivable contingencies and are prepared to face them. We are certain that our steadfastness expresses the Arab will, and

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that Arab Syria wages this battle of honor with the unanimous support of the Arab nation. In standing up to aggression, we shall not be alone, but we will be joined by our Arab brethren and all peace-loving nations in the world. We are strong because our cause is just; we are strong because we are free. We shall not bargain over our rights or at the expense of future generations. Regardless of the challenges and pressures that lie ahead, our position shall not waiver. Our confidence in the future shall remain unbounded.

[Question] The Egyptian-Israeli propaganda apparatus attempts to distort Jordan's position by claiming that Ammon's refusal to join the "peace" process is due to fear that the solution might be at its expense. Would you comment on that?

[Answer] If one equates condemning surrender and the Egyptian-Israeli alliance with refusal to join the peace process, then the entire Arab nation is for refusal. No Arab stands to benefit from al-Sadat's actions. Arab national and regional interest lies in adhering to the resolutions of the Baghdad summit meeting, in faithfulness to the undivided Arab cause and in viewing the battle as a national Arab concern and not the concern of this or that country. All those who oppose al-Sadat and his surrender are defending both their regional and national interests. In this respect, Jordan is no different from other Arab countries.

[Question] There are suggestions that we return to Geneva as an intermediate solution. How does Syria feel about this?

[Answer] Before al-Sadat's visit to Israel and before he aligned Egypt with the enemy, there was an international effort to return to Geneva according to earlier U.N. resolutions. But the visit and its consequences have blocked the path to another Geneva conference. Before we return to Geneva or anywhere else, this obstacle to international peace efforts must be removed.

[Question] What in your view is the best way to a just and permanent peace in the Middle East?

[Answer] Peace in the Middle East can be achieved under the following provisions:

- Total Israeli withdrawal from all Arab lands occupied in 1967;
- Securing the national rights of the Palestinian Arabs, including the right to return to their homeland and the right to self-determination and the creation of an independent state in Palestinian territory;
- Ending the state of war.

Unless these conditions are fulfilled, there can never be peace in the Middle East.

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[Question] Should Israel, under the pretext of putting an end to Palestinian resistance in the occupied territory, attack and take over southern Lebanon, are Syria and the other Arab countries capable of mounting an appropriate response?

[Answer] Israel, for all practical purposes, occupies southern Lebanon now. Sa'ad Haddad is nothing but an embodiment of this occupation. To challenge the Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon, the Arabs must utilize every military, political and economic capability at their disposal. This is the only way to liberate the occupied territories. Israel's expansionist ambitions require no further evidence. The only means to halt Israeli expansion is total Arab commitment and action.

[Question] There are attempts to hold a second Syrian-Lebanese summit meeting. Does Syria favor such a meeting?

[Answer] Syria favors any measure that would strengthen Lebanon's legal government and enable it to extend its authority over all Lebanese territory. Syria favors a united people and country in Lebanon. Contact with our Lebanese brethren is continuing. If the two countries decide a meeting at any level is beneficial, the meeting will be held.

[Question] There is a feeling in Beirut that the factions of the "Lebanese Front" are role acting. While one faction favors good relations with Syria, the others oppose such a move. The ultimate goal of these maneuvers, according to Lebanese observers, is to put Syria on the spot in Lebanon, the Arab world and on the international scale.

[Answer] It is common knowledge that Syria is not a party to the dispute in Lebanon. Syria entered Lebanon to safeguard the unity of the country and its people. The threat to Lebanon's security and independence lies in the armed militia's refusal to submit to the legal government. The threat to Lebanon's security and independence comes from Israel and those who deal with it. The Syrian presence in Lebanon is in the interest of Lebanon's security, independence and progress.

[Question] The Arabs are closely observing relations between Syria and Iraq. How much progress has been made in their bilateral unity discussions?

[Answer] The unity talks are progressing according to the schedule that has been prepared by the Supreme Political Committee. We are now readying as a team a unified constitution.

Efforts are being made to avoid some of the pitfalls of previous attempts at Arab unity. We are also trying to find the best way to restore party unity. We are pleased with progress so far and are optimistic about the future. We are moving ahead earnestly and realistically, without glossing over difficult issues. We are determined, however, to achieve unity and will not be deterred by obstacles. This is our obligation as members of this generation. It is also our obligation as a party. It is imperative that we live up to this task.

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[Question] You have recently returned from an official visit to Iran, where you carried a personal letter from President Haf'iz al-Assad to Ayatollah al-Khomeyni. What are your impressions and what do you project for Arab-Iranian relations in this post Pahlavi era?

[Answer] We view the Iranian revolution as a positive and important development supportive of the just Arab cause. We believe that the establishment of good relations between the Arabs and Iran is beneficial to both sides. My visit to Iran was the first official Arab contact with the revolution. I met and spoke with a number of revolutionary leaders. It was evident that Iran is desirous of good and strong relations with the Arabs. I found the Iranians very supportive of our struggle to regain our occupied lands. Iran appeared very appreciative of Syria's steadfastness and anxious to build strong relations with the Syrian Arab Republic. The Iranian leader Ayatollah al-Khomeyni and Prime Minister Mahdi Bazarghan extended an invitation to our president to visit Iran. I am sure that President al-Assad will be pleased to make the visit as soon as he and the revolutionary leaders find it mutually convenient.

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SYRIA

DISSENSION AFFLICTS SYRIAN COMMUNISTS

Paris AL-WATAN AL-ARABI in Arabic No 116, 4-10 May 79 p 32

[Article: "The Infection of Party Dissension Afflicts the Syrian Communists"]

[Text] It is no secret that the Syrian Communist Party--the oldest in the Arab world--was so plagued by dissension in the '70s that it finally broke into two parallel communist organizations. The first group, led by the 65-year-old traditional party chairman Khalid Bakdash, consists of the old guard, the adherents of the main Soviet ideology. The second group--the political bureau--is more independent of the Moscow line, and is led by Mr Riyadh al-Turk.

During the Fifth Communist Party/Political Bureau Conference, and at subsequent Central Committee meetings 2 months ago, a number of issues, including the party's philosophy and its ability to attract members, came up for discussion. Informed observers say the long discussions have led to further division within the party, with new factions emerging. The lineup:

- The Riyadh al-Turk wing, supported primarily by the "Homs Group," an industrial city in central Syria, and an active communist center in the past;
- The Yusuf Nimr wing, supported by the "Damascus Group," and consisting of party members who are openly and severely critical of Bakdash's leadership;
- The Badr al-Din al-Taweel wing, consisting primarily of members who were disgruntled at the "undemocratic" manner in which party elections were conducted.

The fact of the matter is that the Bakdash faction is in no better condition than the rival al-Turk faction. Internal disputes within the Bakdash faction are responsible for delaying party elections for more than a year. The party leadership, moreover, has not fared well in its attempt to control further division within its ranks. The disputes among the Bakdash faction revolve more on personal loyalties than on political ideology. The main groupings include:

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- The Murad Yusuf wing, a Political Bureau who is reputed to have threatened publicly to splinter the Bakdash faction and to expose what he labeled as "the unbearable conditions" before the entire party.

- The wing led by Yusuf Faysal, the party's deputy secretary general and strongman, who charges the Murad Yusuf group with attempts to foist its views, methods and candidates on the party.

The main loser in the dispute appears to be the faction's leader, Mr Khalid Bakdash himself. For while he must not take sides, each wing claims to be speaking for him.

Observers note that all measures taken so far to heal the rift, including the Central Committee's resolutions adopted last year, are temporary remedies and will not succeed in preventing an eventual breakup. All recommendations on party discipline, criticism and self-criticism have been to no avail.

Syrian communists have a noble past. The Communist Party was created in the early 30's by Mr Bakdash and a handful of workers and educated people. Since then the party has achieved a good deal of success, reaching its peak in the 50's. Much of that success is due to Bakdash's good leadership, superior organizational skill and ability to survive. But the party committed a historical blunder when it opposed the Egyptian-Syrian union in 1958. Mr Bakdash was the only absent representative when the Syrian Parliament endorsed the creation of the union. It seems that the party's strict adherence to the Moscow line was behind the party's opposition to the union. Relations between the Soviet Union and former President Jamal 'Abd al-Nasir were sour at that time. As a consequence of that opposition, the Syrian communists were relentlessly repressed by the government and lost much of their popular support, particularly among those who favored the union. When the union came apart in 1961, Mr Bakdash returned to Damascus and resumed his political activity, strongly opposing any effort to resuscitate the union idea.

When the Ba'ath Party assumed power in 1963, relations between the Ba'athists and the communists began to seesaw for a while. This state of affairs ended when the Communist Party joined the National Progressive front under Hafiz al-Assad, following his reform movement of 1970.

The internecine disputes that beset the Communist Party in the 70's are attributed to personal, political and ideological causes. One major point of contention was the notion of hero worship, or extreme loyalty to one person within the party. The contention grew in intensity as Mr Bakdash advanced in years and as his physical health deteriorated to a point where it began to interfere with the performance of his duties. His position, it appeared, was up for grabs, and the field had many contenders.

In the political and ideological arena, the party leadership sensed a need to map out a new strategy, an Arab line that is more reflective of popular sentiment and rational aspirations, particularly with respect to the concept of

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Arab unity. This new strategy was advocated by Riyad al-Turk, Daniel Nimah, Zafir 'Abd al-Samad and Ibrahim Fikri. The furor over the new approach was so intense that it led to a complete breakup, with Mr al-Turk forming a new party. The majority of his supporters, however, including those listed here, rejoined the Bakdash faction.

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WESTERN SAHARA

DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS TO RESOLVE SAHARAN PROBLEMS

London THE MIDDLE EAST in English Jun 79 pp 36-37

[Text]

The Mauritanian "palace revolution" of 6 April which brought Prime Minister Ahmad Ould-Bouceif to power, appears to have given a new impetus to the stalled diplomatic initiatives in the Western Sahara conflict.

Negotiations at the highest levels between the countries involved in this regional crisis are under way and Paris seems to be the focal point of these renewed peace feelers. Both King Hassan of Morocco and the Mauritanian Premier have visited the French capital recently, and signs of a rapprochement between Paris and Algiers have also appeared since the election of President Chadli.

The search for peace was facilitated by a change in French policy towards the former Spanish Sahara, and President Giscard d'Estaing has now publicly stated that the Saharan question is "a problem of decolonisation". Moreover, French State Secretary for Foreign Affairs Olivier Stin has said that, in spite of their small numbers, the Sahrawi population have the right to self-determination. Yet until the beginning of this year French diplomats supported Morocco and insisted that the Sahara could not qualify as a separate state. Unlike Spain, France has not yet recognised the Polisario liberation front. Spanish recognition came after a meeting in Algiers between Prime Minister Adolfo Suarez and Polisario Secretary-General Muhammad Abdel-Aziz.

Polisario has also made considerable diplomatic headway elsewhere with both Ethiopia and Vietnam recognising the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (RASD), and Polisario leaders were warmly welcomed in Iran.

The summer session of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) is likely to see Morocco increasingly isolated, as the new acting chairman, Liberian President William Tolbert, is generally considered to be less favourable to Morocco than the outgoing chairman, President Jaafar Nimairi of Sudan. Polisario leaders have recently met OAU Secretary-General Edjem Kodjo which was seen as a step towards recognition by the OAU.

Present diplomatic activity seems to hinge on the possibility of Mauritania's giving up its portion of the Sahara, the Tiris el-Gharbiya, to Polisario which could subsequently establish a mini-state. This would then be federated with Mauritania, although Polisario Secretary-General Muhammad Abdel-Aziz previously told *The Middle East* that federation was unacceptable.

The official positions of Algeria and Morocco are still far apart, but a solution to the Saharan conflict is becoming more and more necessary for all the parties involved. In the following articles, *The Middle East* looks at Morocco's policy in the Sahara and examines the effect the war is having on both Morocco and Mauritania.

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Morocco wants to keep the northern portion of the 100,000-square-mile former Spanish Sahara which it annexed during the peaceful Green March in November 1975. Mauritania, however has settled for a unilateral ceasefire and virtual Polisario control of the southern region.

Although there are still 7,000 Moroccan troops in Mauritania, the Algerian-backed Polisario, equipped with substantial Soviet-made arms, has been carrying out successful random hit-and-run strikes to the north.

During a particularly embarrassing strike at Tan Tan, well within Morocco's southern border, earlier this year, some 40 persons died, and 18 women apparently sympathetic to the Polisario cause left with the attackers.

Soon after this King Hassan announced a new, more aggressive strategy including the formation of a National Security Council representing all major political parties. The moderate opposition Istiqlal Party called for attacks over the Algerian border.

Colonel-Major Muhammad Abrouk, a graduate of the War College highly esteemed by military colleagues and known for his loyalty to the King, has been appointed Army Commander of the South. He evaluates the situation in this way: "The problem is that the Polisario has always refused combat. If one of our reconnaissance teams indicated the presence of a column of 150 Landrovers, we would attack instead of trying to find the enemy behind sand dunes."

Moroccan Secretary of State for Saharan Affairs Khalil Hanna Ould-Rachid told *The Middle East*, "Until now the Moroccan Army has not been ordered to pursue the enemy beyond our borders because that might irreparably damage our relations with Algeria. But it is now possible and even probable that we will attack Tindouf. In fact, war with Algeria could break out tomorrow."

Ould-Rachid insisted that Polisario bases do not exist outside Algeria. But he admitted that within the Saharan territory guerrillas are totally mobile, travelling in groups of two to four jeeps along the natural trails that criss-cross the region. For, despite constant reconnoitering, Moroccan columns cannot properly patrol terrain that provides natural cover for guerrilla operations.

In the desert, he explained, an armoured column raises dust that can be seen for 40 kilometres. The elusive guerrillas attack

where least expected and leave before the Moroccans arrive. Morocco's super-swift high-altitude F-5 jets are unable to cope with these small-scale operations and risk being shot down.

After three-and-a-half years in the desert the morale of the 40,000 Moroccan troops in the Sahara is understandably shaky. The army has hastily been brought up to full combat strength, from 70,000 men in 1974 to over 110,000. But it is still ill-equipped, and the US has so far refused to deliver the Cobra combat helicopters needed to fight desert guerrillas.

Ould-Rachid said that the armed forces had been "operational" since 1973. "But because we never intended to wage war with Algeria," he added, "we didn't foresee the need for the modern armaments which we are now acquiring gradually. Arms can be bought anywhere. If we cannot get arms from the US we are not afraid to turn to the USSR with whom we have important commercial agreements on phosphates and fishing."

In a helicopter carrying provisions to the 300-man garrison at Boujdor, Moroccan soldiers scanned the desert horizon for evidence of enemy activity.

Well might they be on the alert, for the Polisario is equipped with Soviet-made 122 missiles, as well as with heavy mortars which have been lobbed into the city of El-Ayoun and the town of Smara to the north. South of a line drawn from Boujdor through El-Ayoun to Smara, the territory is in the hands of whichever unit is passing through.

But in a tent by the sea, Moroccan officers shared a *mechoui* of young lamb and a sweet Saharan rice dish in an atmosphere that belied the existence of war. They enthusiastically cited Saharan tribal connections throughout Morocco as proof of the legitimacy of the Moroccan cause.

Sahara Tidrarin tribal members are found in Oulmes and Oued Zem near Fez; members of the Delim tribe are in Marrakesh and Sidi Kacem; the large Reguibat tribe has relatives in Tetouan; and the Larosien make annual visits to family members in Settati to obtain camels. Indeed the founders of the great dynasties of Morocco moved north from regions well south of the natural frontier formed by the Atlas Mountains.

The Governor of Boujdor, Sherif Dlimi, is of the warrior caste Oulad Delim. Trained in

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the Spanish army, he later fought for Morocco's liberation from France and for the Sahara's liberation from Spain. Somehow his combat-hardened physique and craggy features seemed out of place as he talked of Moroccan efforts to create a settled community for the 3,000 nomads brought from the interior.

Since annexation, the Government of Morocco has been making a substantial effort to encourage the Sahrawi bedouin to adapt to urban living through a three-year sedentarisation programme (see *Business Section p 94*).

Moroccan officials insist that the officials governing the 60,000 inhabitants of the Saharan provinces, including pashas, qaids and khalifas, are 90 per cent Sahrawi. The 213 lower-level officials including shaikhs and moqqadems are 100 per cent Sahrawi. The three provinces are represented in the Moroccan National Assembly by eight Sahrawi representatives.

The authorities deny that there is unemployment. At present 10,000 Sahrawis are said to be in the Moroccan Army and 1,200 are employed at the Bou Craa phosphate mine and port. Yet for all the bustle of construction and the resolutely

cheerful attitude of Government officials, there is a sense of unreality.

Almost all the substantial well-constructed buildings in El-Ayoun have been inherited from the Spanish and barbed wire and armed guards encircle the town. The Bou Craa phosphate mine with its conveyor belt has long since been sabotaged.

Most well-dressed prosperous-looking people appear to be from the north, and from the small number of young adult males in the local population it seems that many have fled to the Polisario. But despite their poverty, Sahrawi men and women possess a dignified bearing and a healthy appearance.

Maintaining the army costs five million dirhams a day and the total bill for national defence is taking 40 per cent of national revenue. Local construction, free hospitalisation and the weekly distribution of food add to the cost.

Obviously the conflict will have to come to a head or be negotiated eventually. Muhammad Fadel Ma el-Ainin, leader of the local Istiqlal Party, told *The Middle East* "We only hope that our neighbours will leave us alone so that we can get on with the development of the Sahara". And no doubt thousands of dispossessed Sahrawi, whatever their political opinions, agree. □

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WESTERN SAHARA

MOROCCAN DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS IN SAHARA NOTED

London THE MIDDLE EAST in English Jun 79 pp 36, 94-95

[Article by Louise MacDonald]

[Text]

The 74,000 Sahrawi bedouin have become the object of a Moroccan "sedentarisation programme" in its fight to maintain control of the Saharan territory. Sporadic but increasingly incisive warfare has made a virtual no-man's land of the territory where they used to roam freely, grazing their camels.

Despite the serious economic difficulties affecting Morocco today, the Government in Rabat is channelling substantial sums of money into helping Sahrawi bedouin in the Western Sahara to adjust to urban living.

The sedentarisation of the 60,000 nomads of the Moroccan-occupied Sahara has become a necessity for Morocco in the continuing hit-and-run war between Moroccan troops and Polisario guerrillas, which has been escalating not only in the desert but inside the borders of Morocco itself.

Since taking over the Western Sahara, the Government of Morocco has budgeted and partially spent MD700mn on construction of schools, hospitals, mosques, administrative buildings, markets, roads and water supplies in towns which have been designated as capitals of the three Saharan "provinces".

El-Ayoun has become a city in transition. In every direction cinder blocks are rising into walls, imported cement is being poured and paint applied. The Governor of El-Ayoun province, Slimane Haddad, believes that

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"In three years time you won't recognise this town. We are thinking about accomplishments rather than politics right now."

The city's MD20mn lycee, with 30 classrooms, eight science laboratories and 250 beds, will be ready in October. Four more schools consisting 70 prefabricated classrooms imported from France will also open in October, as well as two of 35 classrooms each in Boujdor and Smara.

Under the Spanish Protectorate 1,774 Sahrawi pupils were in primary and secondary schools; now a total of 6,849 are attending both primary and secondary schools. One third of these are girls.

According to Haddad, the most serious problem confronting the authorities in establishing an infrastructure for the newly-sedentarised inhabitants is providing drinking water. Locally-available water is salty and the habit of drinking rain water collected in pools on the ground has caused chronic intestinal problems among the population for generations.

Lately MD7mn has been spent on exploring for sweet water and several wells have been located in the vicinity of both EL-Ayoun and Smara. Piping water from the Fom el-Oued 20km north of EL-Ayoun has cost Md10mn and another MD100mn is going into sewage treatment and disposal there, including conveying sewage 25km to the ocean.

At Fom el Oued irrigated land and plastic sheds protecting plants from the desert sun are producing crops of tomatoes, potatoes, courgettes, corn and mint in increasing quantities. A brand new desalination plant at Boujdor is pumping 250 cu.m of water a day for a population of 3,000.

Some MD30mn is being spent on expanding the 900km of road inherited from the Spanish Protectorate, for which 3,000 vehicles are licensed in the southern provinces. A railroad between Marrakesh and EL-Ayoun is under study and an airport is planned for Boujdor.

Houses vs tents: Though Sahrawi bedouin have tended to prefer their nomadic life in the open, they are being successfully lured to town with offers of free land, electricity, available water and materials to build with. Needy families are given complete housing.

"It may be hard to get them out of tents, but once they have enjoyed the comforts of a house they won't give it up", a Moroccan housing official said.

Residents of the corrugated iron shanty-towns that have sprung up around EL-Ayoun and Smara are to build their own homes with materials provided by the Government. The projected infrastructure for 426 lots in EL-Ayoun will cost MD3.5mn and will include a Turkish bath, two large ovens, a dispensary, mosque and shopping centre. Hospital facilities are provided free and there is a day-care centre for small children.

In a project planned for the town of Smara, houses will be specially designed for phased adaptation to sedentary life. A three-room house accommodating an average family of eight persons will support two distinct life styles.

One side will offer a rural setting with a courtyard facing

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an open space to simulate the desert. The enclosed yard will be large enough to accommodate a small stock of animals along with the traditional tent. The house will face onto a city-type street with normal traffic. In this way, members of the family can gradually move from the tent into the house, with the tent remaining available nearby and providing additional living space.

Moroccan officials claim that unemployment does not exist in the three provinces. At present 10,000 Sahrawis are said to be in the Moroccan army and 1,200 are employed at the Bou Craa phosphate mine and port. National Promotion is paying MD20 an hour to 3,000 people in housing construction and several thousand more work in the local administration.

The new fishing port at Tarfaya, scheduled for immediate completion, cost the state MD130mn and development of an important port at El-Ayoun and one at Boujdor will start soon.

These new ports, to be equipped with freezing and canning facilities, will provide extensive employment in what should prove to be a most promising fishing industry, in view of the fact that cold Saharan waters contain an estimated 1.7mn tons of sardines among abundant and varied resources of fish.

In contrast, phosphate production is just ticking over. The Spanish were producing 7mn tons a year from their ultra-modern mine by the end of the Protectorate and were aiming for annual output of 10mn tons.

The mines are now under 65% Moroccan ownership but Moroccan negotiations with the Spanish concerning operation and ownership of the mines have taken two years, during which time much of the jetty

equipment has rusted from disuse and the 100km conveyor belt has been sabotaged.

At present the crude phosphate rock is brought by truck to the port and only 30,000 tons were shipped in the first quarter of 1979. One difficult factor is that no insurance of any kind is available in the Sahara. However, Moroccan officials point out that the reserves of phosphate at Bou Craa are equivalent to only 3% of Moroccan national reserves.

Consumer goods: Despite the depressed state of the phosphate industry the free-zone status of El-Ayoun region means that shops are crammed from floor to ceiling with merchandise imported from Europe via the Canary Islands.

A large 22-inch Grundig colour television set costs MD4,500 in El-Ayoun and would sell for 40% more than that in Rabat. Japanese sets are much cheaper. Everyone in the city seems to be carrying a small calculator and wearing a handsome imported watch.

Shop-owners, who report that business is flourishing, may be Sahrawi but are more often immigrants from the north, frequently Spanish-speaking from Ifni, Nador and Melilla. Officials say that Sahrawis who had invested money in the Canary Islands have repatriated MD60mn.

The shops' customers are mostly the Moroccan army who fill commercial airline flights to Agadir at weekends with items bought at prices far lower than those in the north where import duties rise as high as 100%. To avoid travel through the perilous no-man's-land of the desert, shoppers from Mauritania take a boat to El-Ayoun.

Food items imported from the Canary Islands are not expensive. Beef is several dirhams less expensive than in Rabat,

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but vegetables are rare and of poor quality. The prevalence of goats indicates that the Sahrawi diet is still based upon milk, cheese and goat meat.

The Moroccan Government has stored quantities of staple foods including oil, flour, rice and sugar for weekly distribution among needy Sahrawi families, whose adult males may be in the refugee camp at Tindouf or with the Polisario.

In all, Morocco's "re-cuperation" of the Sahara has proved to be a costly and, so far, not very rewarding venture, a burden the country can ill afford in its present economic state.

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WESTERN SAHARA

SOLUTION TO SAHARAN PROBLEM REMAINS IN PARIS

Paris AFRIQUE-ASIE in French 25 May-10 Jun 79 pp 25-26

[Article by Hassen Zenati]

[Text] At one time it seemed that a rapid political solution to the Saharan tragedy was in the cards but it looks as though the cards have been reshuffled. Are we headed towards peace or towards a renewal of war? One year after the downfall of Moktar Ould Daddah in Mauritania, we are obliged to observe that the same questions are being raised after a few months of optimism. In fact, as the days roll by, uncertainty increases with respect to the real intentions of the Mauritanian leaders regarding the portion of the western Sahara that they have been occupying for nearly four years. Have they finally decided to restore to its rightful owners a territory which is of no interest to them (or so they say) in order to arrive at a final peace with the Polisario?

Just a few weeks ago, matters seemed to be going well. At Tripoli, the Mauritanian minister of foreign affairs, speaking for his government, had made a commitment to evacuate Tiris-el-Gharbia and to quickly commence negotiations with the Polisario in order to determine the method of operations for transfer of power in this part of the western Sahara. Provisionally, the Mauritanian leaders were supposed to surrender on May 26 to the Libyan government so as to establish "a peace offensive" which had appeared to bog down. However, this supposition did not take into account the weakness of a team whose Sahara policy is not decided, at any rate, by the Mauritanian government. Between the two Tripoli meetings, a curious retreat on the part of the Mauritians was observed. The tone changed suddenly within a few days. Statements were issued one after the other from Paris, Fez and Madrid. At first, these were ambiguous, then retreated more and more from the commitment that had been made until it was denied purely and simply. What could have happened that would make Ahmed Ould Bousseif, Mauritanian Prime Minister and "strong man" of the team of April 6, publicly disavow his own Minister of Public Affairs? To what pressures ("friendly", of course) must he have reacted and to what blackmail did he yield? What illusory assurances must have been lavished on him to cause him to retrace so many steps on the path to peace? Into what diplomatic or military schemes were preparations being made to involve him?

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These are the questions which arise today, at the very time that the Mauritanian people demand, with all their strength, the military disengagement of its government in the western Sahara in order to reconstruct its devastated country and to reestablish its national unity, shaken by the centrifugal forces which broke loose, threatening to split up the country. Nevertheless, the people of Mauritania are not the only ones to react in this fashion. Peace has also become a requirement that is shared by larger and larger strata of society in Morocco. Gone is the day of joining without any reservations Hassan's crusade for the "Great Morocco." Gone also is the day of the holy alliance for the "recovery of the plundered provinces" except for those remaining on the general staffs of the parties henceforth committed to the hilt to support of the monarchy, in the Parliament as well as in the defense council.

The Sahara war, which has long been hidden if not denied, henceforth serves to be revealing of the truth. It enriches the wealthiest, broadens the terrain of corruption and of business in the military establishment, often to the detriment of the underpaid soldier, and makes the poorest even poorer by furthermore exposing them to a useless death in a distant corner of the desert.

A million dollars a day is the price paid by the Moroccan people so that Hassan II can save his face and throne. For these people, the intolerance threshold has long since been exceeded. The rise in social struggle accompanying the rebirth of the union movement led by the CDT is the telltale sign of this.

At the same time that the government pays dearly for its military supplies (The foreign debt today exceeds five billion dollars), the purchasing power of the masses of people has deteriorated from day to day. But demands do not end at the union level. Recently, high school students, shouting "death to the king, long live the republic!" demonstrated while 1500 teachers were arrested or suspended from their jobs. As for the soldiers, who are worn out as a result of four long years of anguish in the "death triangle" of El-Ayoun, Smara and Tan-Tan, they endeavor to avoid the blows of the Polisario, entrench themselves and refuse to fight.

Next summer will be the most scorching one that they will have had to face in nearly four years according to a promise issued by Brahim Ghali, Defense Minister for the Sahara, unless.....

In fact, as far as the leaders of the Saharan Democratic Arab Republic (RASD) are concerned, the war appears to be today, as it has never before, nothing less than the pursuit of a policy conducted by other means for the purpose of imposing territorial integrity and selfdetermination on an adversary fiercely draped in his intransigence in spite of his diplomatic isolation. "This is a combination of Nero and the Shah of Iran" said a Saharan official in evaluating the present attitude of Hassan II. Actually, a process of Iranization has indeed begun in Morocco.

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Meanwhile, the diplomats are floundering about. The Spanish prime minister, a fine diplomat indeed, does not fear sinking into coarseness. In fact, while respect for form is a virtue, the cult of formalism becomes a vice. Wearing the hat of the UCD (Union of the Democratic Center), Suarez summons his courage to the point of shaking hands with the "rebel" Mohammed Abdelaziz, secretary general of the Polisario, of coming into contact with him and of holding discussions with him. What does he say to him? Among other things, the following: "The fact that Spain has put an end to its rule in the Western Sahara does not at all signify a transfer of sovereignty for the benefit of Mauritania and of Morocco since we are dealing with a non-autonomous territory in accordance with the terms of Article 73 of the United Nations charter. "In less juridical language, this means that decolonization of the western Sahara has not been completed. At least one item is necessary for this, namely, exercising of the right of the Saharan people to selfdetermination. To a great extent, the Spanish government is responsible for failure to complete this process of decolonization, since their representatives were the ones who signed the famous accord of Madrid in November 1975 by means of which Morocco and Mauritania annexed the Saharan territory to which the African rule of intangibility of borders arising from colonization was also to be applied.

The Crux of the Problem

Quite logically, Suarez should have drawn the conclusion which compels recognition, namely, to denounce the Madrid accord and to let the matter follow its own course from the point where it had been interrupted in 1975. But he has not done so. Wearing the hat of Prime Minister of Spain, Suarez rejects what he had accepted as Secretary General of the UCD, plunging into a specious argument only in order to justify a denial, which, in his opinion, has the value of a dogma. It could be that the denunciation of the Madrid accord might provoke a Parliamentary crisis in Spain which would be judged inopportune by the Prime Minister. However, this is not the case. By reopening the Saharan case, Suarez would be taking no chances since all of the Spanish political parties recognize the Polisario, if not the RASD, and for months have been requesting cancellation of the Madrid accord without any qualifications. It would even have been a good political tactic for the Spanish Prime Minister to take the lead in obtaining a nearly unanimous vote which, beyond the shadow of a doubt, would strengthen his personal position. He does not wish to ask for it. Which foreign string is pulling on his leg?

To be sure, Moroccan pressure plays a role in the refusal of Suarez. Indeed, Morocco is the ninth client of Spain which, it should be remembered, continues to benefit from the generosity of the Moroccan government in the matter of direct foreign investments.

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But hasn't Suarez already violated the tacit rule of "the good neighbor" by recognizing the Polisario (in his position as secretary general of the UCD, it is true) and by negotiating publicly with it? Furthermore, the Moroccans themselves have not been duped. The political parties as well as the House of Representatives have reacted vigorously to condemn what they consider from their point of view to be the "duplicity" of Suarez, although for different reasons. Caught between two positions, the Spanish Prime Minister has therefore not selected either the easiest route or the most direct one. His present policy remains an enigma, unless we must look elsewhere for an explanation and this elsewhere is not far. It is Paris. This is the firm belief of all observers and interested parties. While indeed being very discrete, the casting of roles between Madrid and Paris is nonetheless obvious. In the diplomatic game which is being played today, Spain enjoys only relative autonomy with respect to France which holds up one of the pillars of its Mediterranean strategy against its admission to the EEC (European Economic Commission). In fact, Suarez has probably been simply a scout or just a broker. The few (incongruous) questions that he asked the Saharan leaders during his stay in Algiers leave no doubt as to the precise nature of his mission. The tasks of first making an investigation, then working together with the French government are no less obvious in the latest developments of the situation in the area.

The crux of the problem does indeed lie in Paris which does not wish to put up with any solution arrived at outside of France. What are its intentions? Doesn't this situation resemble that of the sorcerer's apprentice who cannot manage to control the forces which he has unleashed? While the Mauritanian regime has only been rescued at the price of direct military intervention by the French "Jaguars" and while the Moroccan monarchy is coming apart at the seams, the Americans are watching this area more carefully after having waited patiently for France to handle the situation by itself in "its" zone of influence. Will they go as far as picking up the pieces for fear of seeing the king join the Shah in exile in the Bahamas? This is not out of the question and constitutes another source of concern for the strategists at French headquarters.

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